

ENQA Review 2017

Annexes to the Self-Assessment Report

October 2016

ENQA Review 2017

Annexes to the Self-Assessment Report

October 2016

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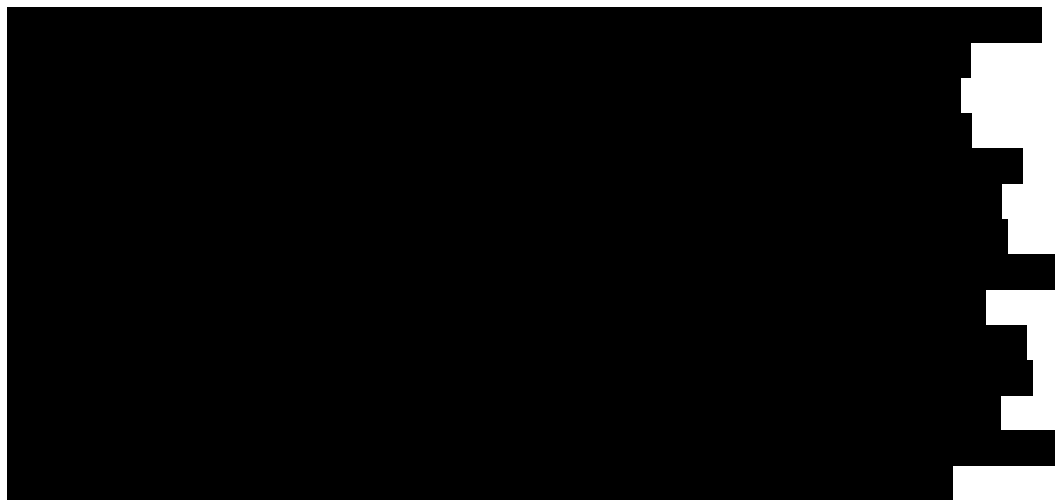
Annex 1

CV's of NVAO
Board members

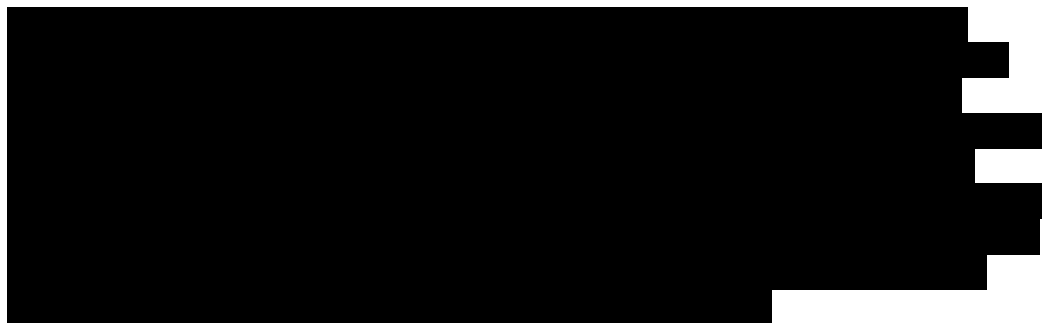
**Annex 1
CV's of NVAO
Board Members**

Executive Board

Anne Flierman, Chairman



Ann Verreth, Vice Chair



Paul Zevenbergen, Board Member

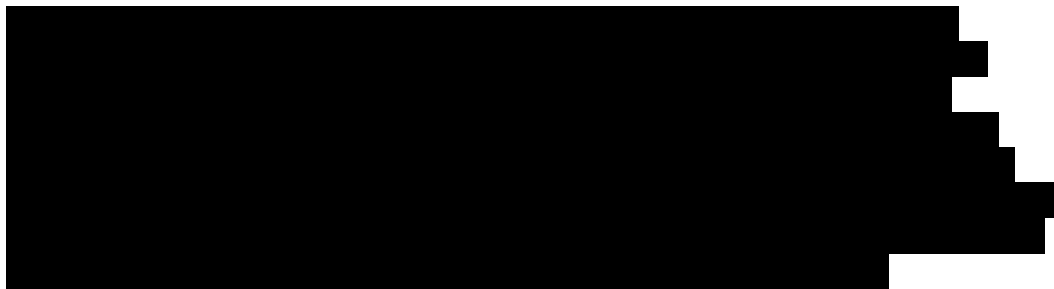


Marc Luwel, Board Member

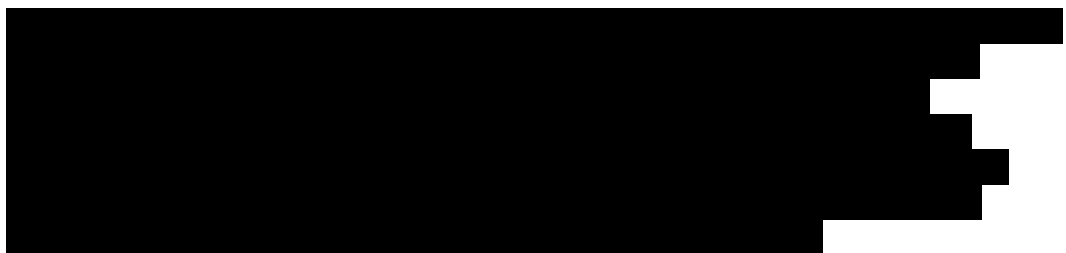


General Board members¹

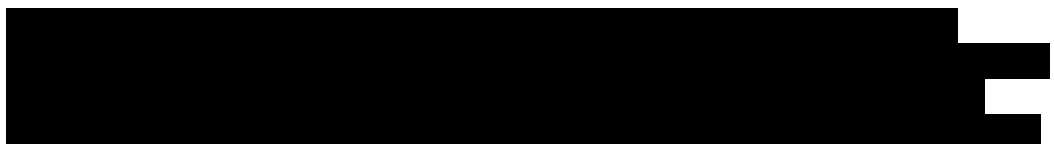
Bruno Bruins



Mia de Schamphelaere



Koen Geven



¹ Members of the Board (Executive and General Board) are appointed for four years and can be re-appointed once for another four years. By 31 December 2017, the second term of the Board members Tillekaerts, van Roon, and Geven will expire. By the same date, the first term of the Board members Doom, De Schamphelaere, Maes, and van Vucht Tijssen will expire.

[Redacted]

Bart Maes

[Redacted]

Paul van Roon

[Redacted]

Claire Tillekaerts

[Redacted]

Jasper Tuytel

[Redacted]

Lieteke van Vucht Tijssen

[Redacted]

Ruddy Doom



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Annex 2

Key figures on
higher education
in the Netherlands
and Flanders

Annex 2: Key figures on higher education in the Netherlands and Flanders

Table 1: Overview of key figures on higher education in the Netherlands and Flanders

	The Netherlands	Flanders
Inhabitants	16.900.726	6.471.996*
Universities	14	6
Universities of applied sciences (NL) and University colleges (FL)	37	21
Recognised private institutions (NL) and Registered institutions (FL)	70	5
Other statutory registered institutions (FL)		6
Programmes	3500	1400
Fulltime students (NL: 2015-2016; FL: 2014-2015) (x 1000)	700,7	224.3

* excluding Brussels; including Brussels: 7.652.527

A. Number of programmes and staff The Netherlands*

The Netherlands	Academic education 2015-2016	Higher professional education 2015-2016
No. of Bachelor's programmes	402	1048
No. of Master's programmes	797	240
Associate Degrees		128
Staff: persons/fte	51.246/44.243 (2015)	45.838/33.840,8 (2014)
No. of institutions	14	37

Private institutions	Bachelor's progr.	Master's progr.	Associate Degree
70 institutions	164	75	44

* Sources: internal data NVAO.

B. Number of programmes and staff Flanders

Flanders	Academic education	Higher professional education
Bachelor's programmes*	233	290
Advanced Bachelor's programmes*	--	68
Master's programmes*	589**	--
Advanced master's programmes*	227**	--
Staff (persons) (2014-2015)	15.085	10.637
No. of institutions	6	16

Private institutions	Academic	Professional
	Vesalius College	--
	Europacollege	
	Continental Theological Seminary	
	Inno.com	
	Von Karman instituut voor stromingsdynamica	
	Flanders Business School University of Kent	

*Source: Hogeronderwijsregister accessed 7 april 2016. Exclusive of reparatory programmes are left out of this overview.

** Master's and Advanced Master's programmes can also be professionally oriented.

Table 2: Total enrolment higher education in the Netherlands

Enrolment 2015-2016 (x 1000)	Male	Female	Total
Professional Education	212,4	230,2	442,6
Academic Education	126,7	131,4	258,1
Total	339,1	361,6	700,7

Table 3: Evolution of enrolment in higher professional education in the Netherlands

Evolution of Enrolment 2010-2016 (x 1000)	Male	Female	Total
2010 – 2011	200,1	216,8	416,9
2011 – 2012	203,4	220,3	423,7
2012 – 2013	202,4	219,3	421,7
2013 – 2014	211,3	229,0	440,3
2014 – 2015	214,3	232,2	446,5
2015 – 2016	212,4	230,2	442,6

Table 4: Evolution of enrolment in academic education in the Netherlands

Evolution of Enrolment 2010-2016 (x 1000)	Male	Female	Total
2010 – 2011	116,7	123,7	240,7
2011 – 2012	118,5	125,3	243,8
2012 – 2013	116,7	123,0	239,7
2013 – 2014	121,2	127,1	248,3
2014 – 2015	123,7	129,8	253,5
2016 – 2016	126,7	131,4	258,1

Table 5: Total enrolment higher education in Flanders

Enrolment 2014-2015	Male	Female	Total
Professional Education	45.159	62.939	108.098
Academic Education	53.012	56.436	109.448
Arts Education	3.127	3.582	6.709
Total			224.255

Table 6: Evolution of enrolment in higher professional education in Flanders

Evolution of Enrolment 2010-2015	Male	Female	Total
2010 – 2011	39.595	55.541	95.136
2011 – 2012	41.180	58.365	99.545
2012 – 2013	42.471	60.058	102.529
2013 – 2014	43.607	61.421	105.028
2014 – 2015	45.159	62.939	108.098

Table 7: Evolution of enrolment in academic education in Flanders

Evolution of Enrolment 2014-2015 (x 1000)	Male	Female	Total
2010 – 2011	52.785	55.283	108.068
2011 – 2012	53.962	57.104	111.066
2012 – 2013	55.370	58.398	113.768
2013 – 2014	53.112	56.199	109.311
2014 – 2015	53.012	56.436	109.448

Table 8: Evolution of enrolment in arts education in Flanders (academic and professional programmes)

Evolution of Enrolment 2013-2015	Male	Female	Total
2013 – 2014	3.214	3.578	6.792
2014 – 2015	3,127	3.582	6.709

Sources:

1. Flemish Education in Figures, yearly reports 2010-2015, DHO.
2. Figures on number of programmes, enrolment and staff size universities in the Netherlands: www.vsnu.nl
3. Figures on number of programmes, enrolment and staff size universities of applied sciences in the Netherlands: www.verenighogescholen.nl
4. www.nvaio.net.

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Annex 3

Assessment frameworks
for the higher education
accreditation system of
the Netherlands 2014



Assessment frameworks for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands

19 December 2014
Version 1.1



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1 Structure of the system

Accreditation takes place at the programme level. Thus, the accreditation system continues to focus on the quality of individual programmes. In addition, institutions may request NVAO to conduct a so-called institutional quality assurance assessment. Should such a thorough audit reveal that an institution's quality assurance is in such good order that the quality of the programmes is systematically improved, wherever necessary, NVAO will then place that institution in a different accreditation regime. The accreditation methods practised under this regime differ from those implemented for programmes without a positive institutional quality assurance assessment. Under this regime, an assessment panel of independent experts assesses each programme on a limited number of standards pertaining to the essence of educational quality. On the basis of this assessment, NVAO decides whether or not to accredit that programme. This leaves the teaching staff free to devote their attention and energy to expert suggestions for improvement relating to the core of their teaching, rather than spending time on pre-conditional aspects that are better dealt with at the institutional level, as the trustworthiness of the institution regarding those themes has already been demonstrated at the institutional level. This is a system in which:

- a. institutional quality assurance assessments bolster an institution-wide internal quality culture;
- b. programme accreditations focus on the essence of the education provided: (improving) substantive quality;
- c. a proper balance is achieved between assessing programmes on the one hand and quality improvement on the other.

The accreditation system comprises the following assessment frameworks:

1. an institutional-level framework to be used for "institutional quality assurance assessments"¹, the so-called **institutional quality assurance assessment**;
2. a programme-level framework with "limited assessment criteria for the accreditation of institutions whose institutional quality assurance assessment produced a positive result"², the so-called **limited programme assessment**;
3. a programme-level framework with "extensive assessment criteria for accreditations"³, the so-called **extensive programme assessment** (required if an institutional quality assurance assessment turns out negative and for institutions that have not applied for an institutional quality assurance assessment);
4. a programme-level framework with "limited assessment criteria for the initial accreditation of new programmes provided by institutions whose institutional quality assurance assessment produced a positive result"⁴, the so-called **limited initial accreditation**;
5. a programme-level framework with "extensive assessment criteria for the initial accreditation of new programmes"⁵, the so-called **extensive initial accreditation** (required if an institutional quality assurance assessment turns out negative and for institutions that have not applied for an institutional quality assurance assessment);
6. frameworks relating to the **Associate Degrees**;

1 Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (WHW), Articles 5a.13a - 13e.

2 Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (WHW), Article 5a.13f.

3 Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (WHW), Article 5a. 8.

4 Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (WHW), Article 5a.13g.

5 Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (WHW), Article 5a. 10a.

7. an assessment framework to determine whether an institution or a programme has any **distinctive features**.⁶
8. an assessment framework for the **extensive initial accreditation** of a legal body intending to provide its first higher education programme.

The first chapters present the frameworks pertaining to the assessment of institutions and programmes. The following is successively outlined for each of the assessment frameworks: its set-up, the framework itself, the elements of the assessment process and the decisions to be taken by NVAO. Chapter 7 outlines the background and the criteria that apply to the award of a distinctive feature. Chapter 8 outlines the documentation required for the various assessments. Chapter 9 encompasses stipulations regarding modes of study and locations.

Chapter 10 defines the assessment scales that apply to programme assessments and presents examples for the operationalisation of said scales. Chapter 11 encompasses the assessment rules. Chapter 12 elaborates the regulations concerning conditional initial accreditation decisions, conditional decisions on institutional audits and granting improvement periods in an accreditation process.

Chapter 13 outlines the regulations regarding the composition of audit panels for institutional audits and the composition of assessment panels for programme assessments.

The frameworks pertaining to extensive initial accreditations are presented in Chapter 14.

The document at hand concludes by outlining the appeal procedures in Chapter 15.

The assessment frameworks for Associate Degree programmes and the statutory distinctive feature of “small-scale and intensive education” have been submitted to Parliament separately; they have already been approved by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. These frameworks have not been included in this document.

This is version 1.1 of the assessment framework. Several editorial changes have been implemented vis-à-vis version 1.0.

⁶ Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (WHW), Article 5a.10.

2 Institutional audits

2.1 Set-up

The object of the institutional quality assurance assessment is to determine whether the board of an institution has implemented an effective quality assurance system, based on its vision of the quality of the education provided, which enables it to guarantee the quality of the programmes offered. Institutional audits are expressly not aimed at assessing the quality of individual programmes.

In essence, institutional quality assurance assessments revolve around five coherent questions:

1. What is the vision of the institution with regard to the quality of the education it provides?
2. How does the institution intend to realise this vision?
3. How does the institution gauge the extent to which the vision is realised?
4. How does the institution work on improvement?
5. Who is responsible for what?

These five questions have been translated into five standards. Regarding each of these five standards, the audit panel gives a weighted and substantiated judgement on a three-point scale: meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard. The audit panel subsequently gives a substantiated final conclusion on the question of whether an institution is in control with regard to the quality of its programmes. This judgement is also given on a three-point scale: positive, negative or conditionally positive.

2.2 Assessment framework for institutional audits

Vision of the quality of the education provided

Standard 1: *The institution has a broadly supported vision of the quality of its education and the development of a quality culture.*

Explanation: This vision pertains to the institution's ambition regarding the quality of its education and its requirements regarding the quality of its programmes.
For the purpose of developing a quality culture, the board of the institution encourages the programmes to monitor their quality and implement improvements wherever required. An active role by all those involved in the education provided is vitally important to this end.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

Policy

Standard 2: *The institution pursues an adequate policy in order to realise its vision of the quality of its education. This comprises at least: policies in the field of education, staff, facilities, accessibility and feasibility for students with a functional disability, embedding of research in the education provided, as well as the interrelation between education and the (international) professional field and discipline.*

Explanation: The policy fields to be assessed are not limited to those stated in the standard but depend on the institution's vision of the quality of its education. Adequate policy presupposes concrete objectives ensuing from said vision and allocation of sufficient resources to implement said policy.
Anchoring research in the education provided is important because all higher education institutions have to engage in research to some extent, even if they do not conduct research themselves and only wish to inform students of new scientific developments in the domain of the programme in which they are enrolled. This standard expressly does not involve an assessment of the research itself.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

Output

Standard 3: *The institution has insight into the extent to which its vision of the quality of its education is realised. It gauges and evaluates the quality of its programmes on a regular basis, among students, staff, alumni and representatives of the professional field.*

Explanation: The institution has management information with regard to the implementation of policy and the output of its programmes. It also has an adequate system of internal evaluations and external assessments. The evaluation and gauging activities have been set up efficiently and provide the board of the institution with aggregated information. Institution-wide uniformity in the evaluation and gauging activities is not required.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

Improvement policy

Standard 4: *The institution can demonstrate that it systematically improves the quality of its programmes wherever required.*

Explanation: The institution pursues an active improvement policy based on its insight into the output achieved. The institution takes action if so prompted by the results of internal and external evaluations. This contributes to the quality culture within the institution.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

Organisation and decision-making structure

Standard 5: *The institution has an effective organisation and decision-making structure with regard to the quality of its programmes, which clearly defines the tasks, authorities and responsibilities and which encompasses the participation of students and staff.*

Explanation: The organisation and decision-making structure enables the institution to realise its vision (standard 1), its policy (standard 2), the output (standard 3) and its improvement policy (standard 4) in a coherent fashion.

The commitment of staff and students is demonstrated by the manner in which they are consulted and the consideration of their recommendations in the programmes. If laid down by law, the assessment of this standard also covers the terms of reference and the positioning of examining boards and programme committees.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

General judgement

Based on its vision of the quality of the education provided, the board of the institution has implemented an effective quality assurance system, which enables it to guarantee the quality of the programmes offered.

Judgement: Positive, negative or conditionally positive (weighted and substantiated)

If the audit panel pronounces the judgement of conditionally positive, it will explicitly state the relevant conditions and the timeframe within which the conditions must be met. The panel will only pronounce the judgement of conditionally positive if, in its opinion, the institution is able to meet the conditions set within a maximum of two years.

2.3 Composition of the audit panel

NVAO convenes and appoints an audit panel to conduct the institutional audit. The institution to be assessed is entitled to lodge substantiated objections to the composition of the audit panel. The regulations pertaining to the composition of audit panels are listed in Chapter 13 of this framework.

2.4 Assessment process

2.4.1 Administrative consultation

NVAO wishes to customise its operations and take account of the diversity in organisational formats, the desired degree of internationalisation of the audit and the specific nature of an institution. For that reason, the assessment process starts off with administrative consultations between the institution and NVAO. These consultations focus on the institution's organisational structure with regard to the education it provides, the possible (international) composition of the audit panel, the language in which the audit must be conducted, the relevant time frame and the material available in the institution for the purpose of the institutional audit. If so desired, an institution may use the institutional audit to assess the quality assurance of so-called non-degree programmes.

2.4.2 Accreditation portrait

Based on the administrative consultations with the institution, NVAO starts off by drawing up an "accreditation portrait". The accreditation portrait is based on the accreditation decisions NVAO has taken with regard to new and existing programmes in the six years prior to the institutional audit. Other information available to NVAO is also factored in. The accreditation portrait is handed over to the audit panel. It is submitted to the institution in question beforehand and the institution is given an opportunity to respond.

2.4.3 Critical reflection

The institution draws up a critical reflection. In essence, the critical reflection answers the question of how the institution demonstrates that it is in control of the quality of the programmes offered. The critical reflection follows the standards outlined for the institutional audit framework, whereby the institution's strengths and weaknesses are described by reference to notable examples. The critical reflection is a self-contained document that can be read separately.

The critical reflection contains a number of basic data on the institution and its programmes. These enable the audit panel to gain a global picture of the institution. The critical reflection comprises a maximum of 50 pages; it has very few appendices and any appendices are limited in size. The required basic data are listed in Chapter 8.

When considering the standards, the institution itself is expected to set a course for its vision and policies, whereupon it is up to the audit panel to assess to what extent the institution manages to achieve its ambitions. This means, for example, that an audit panel must check whether an institution whose vision indicates that it wishes to focus on internationalisation of – or in – its programmes not only develops policy and makes resources available to that end but also evaluates and wherever necessary adjusts said policy.

A similar reasoning applies to aspects such as teaching strategies, prior experiential learning, input from the professional field etcetera. If these have been incorporated in the vision and policy regarding the programmes, they should also be covered by the evaluation, the information gathering, an assessment of the quality achieved and measures for improvement, if any.

As for staff and facilities, the institutional audit involves assessing the policy and procedures in place with regard to staff and the facilities rather than their programme-specific realisation. Consequently, the policy and procedures must be specified in the critical

reflection. The implementation of policy is considered in the institutional audit but programme-specific substantive matters such as, for example, teachers' subject expertise are only considered in programme assessments.

In its assessment, the audit panel limits itself to the institution's policy regarding the effectiveness of the quality assurance system in place for the programmes. The panel does not judge the quality of the programmes.

For the purpose of describing its output, an institution can include relevant public information, for example from the *Keuzegids* [Guide to Higher Education Courses] or *Studiekeuze123* [www.studychoice.nl].

2.4.4 *Site visit*

The site visit for the purpose of the institutional audit comprises two components and takes a total of at least two to, in principle, five days. The panel may extend its visit if prompted by the circumstances. As a rule, the audit panel starts off by visiting the institution for a day, followed by a second visit after two to four weeks. The panel may decide to divert from this set-up in consultation with the institution and NVAO.

First visit: exploration

Prior to the first visit, the audit panel has studied the institution's critical reflection and the accreditation portrait. Prior to its first visit, the panel discusses the questions it intends to put to the discussion partners. During the preliminary meeting, the audit panel also discusses a number of documents underpinning the critical reflection.

The first visit has an exploratory nature. The audit panel gains insight into the ins and outs of the institution, the specific points for attention of the board of the institution and satisfaction among students, teaching staff and other stakeholders. It identifies the topics to be investigated in more detail.

During the first visit, the audit panel will, in any case, meet with the following discussion partners:

- the supervisory board (of publicly-funded institutions);
- the board of the institution;
- the managers responsible for education;
- quality assurance experts and other relevant staff;
- teachers from representative bodies;
- students from representative bodies;
- if relevant: representatives from the professional field.

The schedule for the visit is drawn up by the NVAO process co-ordinator in consultation with the chair of the audit panel and the contact person of the institution. The panel determines the structure and organisation of the visit. It decides at his own discretion which teachers and which students it would like to see and which documents it would like to examine. In principle, the following pre-conditions are observed:

- The meetings take 45 – 60 minutes.
- In principle, the delegations of the institution comprise no more than six people.
- In between the meetings, the audit panel takes time to deliberate.

In addition, the panel will set aside time for open consultations. The institution and the panel will make these open consultations widely known, both prior to and during the visit.

At the end of the first visit, the chair of the audit panel provides brief feedback information to the institution. This feedback presents the panel's first impressions of the quality assurance in place in the institution. In addition, it indicates the audit trails to be conducted. Audit trails are studies pertaining to the implementation of policy and/or the management of problems, in which the audit panel follows the trail from the institutional level to the implementation level or vice versa. The audit panel decides which topics to consider in the audit trails and which individuals it would like to see to that end. The institution may point out well-founded other options to the audit panel or request the panel to conduct an additional audit trail. In order to minimise the workload for the institution, the audit panel gives specific instructions regarding the documents to be studied for the audit trails and the required discussion partners.

The institution prepares the second visit in consultation with the NVAO process co-ordinator. The panel ultimately decides on the structure and the organisation of the visit.

Second visit: in-depth study

During the second visit to the institution, a further discussion takes place between the audit panel and representatives of the institution regarding points for attention emerging from the meetings and the documents studied during the first visit. This discussion enables the audit panel to ascertain whether its initial impressions were correct. Again, the delegations of the institution comprise a maximum of, in principle, six persons.

The audit panel needs to demonstrate how it has ascertained whether an institution's quality assurance system works. This is where the audit trails come in. There are vertical and horizontal audit trails. It should be noted in this regard that institutional audits expressly do not involve assessing programmes but rather assessing the functioning of the quality assurance system in relation to the programmes.

In a vertical audit trail, the panel examines to what degree an element of the vision referred to in standard 1 is actually put into practice. All standards in the framework are considered in succession. For example, the panel may examine whether the intended international exchange of students is actually effected.

Horizontal audit trails focus on the realisation of a single standard (in other words: a component of the quality assurance system) in a number of programmes. For example, the functioning of programme committees or the monitoring of measures for improvement.

At the end of the second visit, the chair of the audit panel provides brief and well-balanced feedback to the institution regarding the findings of the panel.

2.4.5 Assessment procedure within the audit panel

The audit panel presents a judgement regarding all the standards contained in the assessment framework. This judgement is based on an appraisal of the positive and critical elements in the panel's findings. Options for the judgement are: meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard. Subsequently, the panel formulates a general, weighted and substantiated judgement on the question of whether an institution is in control of the quality of the programmes it offers. That judgement is also given on a three-point scale: positive, negative or conditionally positive.

2.4.6 Advisory report

The audit panel secretary draws up an advisory report comprising 20 to 30 pages. The main content of the report is made up of the panel's judgements regarding the standards. It is important for the audit panel to include underpinnings based on the institution's critical reflection, the meetings with representatives of the institution and the underlying data from

the documents studied. For that reason, the advisory report will include notable and representative examples.

The advisory report is preceded by a general consideration of the judgement regarding the institution's quality assurance comprising a maximum of two pages. Any measures for improvement will be presented in a separate paragraph and in the summary of the advisory report. In addition, the report contains a score table with the judgements emerging from the institutional audit, information on the dates of the site visits, the names of the discussion partners, a number of basic data concerning the institution (see Chapter 8), an overview of the material studied and the declarations of independence signed by the panel members and the secretary. In its report, the panel gives an account of the manner in which it has organised its visit and how it has arrived at its choice of discussion partners and documents.

At the end of the second visit, the contents of the advisory report are discussed and tentatively laid down by the audit panel members.

NVAO forwards the advisory report to the board of the institution once all panel members have approved its contents. The institution is given a term of two weeks to respond to any factual inaccuracies in the report, whereupon the chair of the audit panel endorses the report after all panel members have approved its contents. The report is signed by the chair and the secretary of the panel and submitted to NVAO for decision-making. If NVAO finds that a report raises questions or if an institution so desires, NVAO may invite the institution and/or the audit panel for further consultations.

2.5 NVAO decision-making

NVAO forms its opinion independently, based on the advisory report submitted by the audit panel.

A positive decision is valid for a term of six years. This means that the programme assessments may be conducted in accordance with the limited programme assessment framework.

A "conditionally positive" judgement is valid for a maximum of two years.⁷ During that period, the programme assessments may be conducted in accordance with the limited programme assessment framework. A positive accreditation decision or a positive initial accreditation decision based on the limited framework will subsequently be valid for a maximum of two years. When given the "conditionally positive" judgement, the institution must acquire a positive judgement within the stipulated timeframe, whereby NVAO ascertains, based on the judgement of the audit panel, whether the institution meanwhile meets the conditions set. If the institution fails to apply for an additional assessment or does not meet the conditions, the positive decision expires.

If, in the opinion of NVAO, the institution manages to satisfy the conditions set on the basis of the institutional audit, the validity of a positive accreditation decision or positive initial accreditation decision will be extended to a total of six years.

⁷ Article 5a, 13d, paragraph 6, Dutch Higher Education and Research Act; Accreditation Decree of the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act.

Satisfaction of the conditions set will be assessed by an audit panel commissioned by NVAO. The additional assessment will basically be carried out in accordance with the procedure for regular institutional audits. The audit panel will focus on the conditions set earlier.⁸

A “negative” judgement means that an institution cannot apply for an institutional audit for a period of three years. Any programme assessments will be carried out in accordance with the extensive programme assessments regime. Programmes that have been accredited during the introduction regime⁹ based on a limited assessment or have passed initial accreditation must undergo additional assessment if approval is withheld following an institutional audit. The institution must apply to NVAO for such additional assessment; the protocol regarding additional assessments is available on www.nvao.net.

⁸ Article 5a,13d, paragraph 6 in conjunction with Article 5a,13e of the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act

⁹ Article 18.32c, paragraph 5, in conjunction with the additional assessment protocol.

3 Limited programme assessment (accreditation)

3.1 Set-up

The framework for limited assessments of existing programmes is used for institutions that have obtained a positive judgement following an institutional audit.¹⁰ The assessment is based on a discussion with peers regarding the content and quality of the programme. It focuses on three questions:

1. What is the programme aiming for?
2. How is the programme realising this aim?
3. Is the programme achieving its objectives?

These three questions have been translated into four standards. Regarding each of these four standards, an assessment panel gives a substantiated judgement on a four-point scale: unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or excellent. The panel subsequently gives a substantiated final conclusion regarding the overall quality of the programme, on the same four-point scale.

¹⁰ Institutions with a positive institutional audit may also opt for the framework relating to extensive programme assessments outlined in Chapter 4.

3.2 Assessment framework for limited programme assessments

Intended learning outcomes

Standard 1: *The intended learning outcomes of the programme have been concretised with regard to content, level and orientation; they meet international requirements.*

Explanation: As for level and orientation (bachelor's or master's; professional or academic), the intended learning outcomes fit into the Dutch qualifications framework. In addition, they tie in with the international perspective of the requirements currently set by the professional field and the discipline with regard to the contents of the programme. Insofar as is applicable, the intended learning outcomes are in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations.

Judgement: Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, excellent (weighted and substantiated)

Teaching-learning environment

Standard 2: *The curriculum, staff and programme-specific services and facilities enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.*

Explanation: The contents and structure of the curriculum enable the students admitted to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The quality of the staff and of the programme-specific services and facilities is essential to that end. Curriculum, staff, services and facilities constitute a coherent teaching-learning environment for the students.

Judgement: Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, excellent (weighted and substantiated)

Assessment

Standard 3: *The programme has an adequate assessment system in place.*

Explanation: The tests and assessments are valid, reliable and transparent to the students. The programme's examining board safeguards the quality of the interim and final tests administered.

Judgement: Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, excellent (weighted and substantiated)

Achieved learning outcomes

Standard 4: *The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.*

Explanation: The level achieved is demonstrated by interim and final tests, final projects and the performance of graduates in actual practice or in post-graduate programmes.

Judgement: Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, excellent (weighted and substantiated)

General conclusion

The quality of the programme is

Judgement: Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, excellent (weighted and substantiated)

The assessment is based on the definitions and rules outlined in Chapters 10, 11 and 12. The definitions relate to both the scores obtained for the individual standards and the overall scores awarded to the programme.

3.3 Composition of the assessment panel

It is imperative that assessment panels are composed in a manner allowing meaningful discussions among peers, in which the panel remains sufficiently independent. The panel is convened by the institutions that together constitute an assessment group. The institutions appoint a secretary and subsequently present the panel to NVAO for approval. To that end the institutions provide data on the expertise and independence of the panel members and the secretary, in a manner stipulated by NVAO. The composition of assessment panels is covered in Chapter 13 of this framework.

3.3.1 Assessment groups

Under Article 5a.2 paragraph 3a of the Higher Education and Research Act, NVAO places programmes in assessment groups, at the suggestion of the institutions concerned. Before NVAO decides on a programme's placement in an assessment group, the board of the institution concerned is given the opportunity to present its views.

3.4 Assessment process

3.4.1 Critical reflection

For the purpose of the assessment by the assessment panel, the programme presents a critical reflection of the programme. The critical reflection should follow the standards outlined for the limited programme assessment framework and describes the programme's strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the report indicates which measures for improvement have been taken following the previous assessment. The critical reflection is a self-contained document that can be read separately.

The assessment framework for limited programme assessments is structured in a manner allowing programmes ample scope to emphasise their unique character. The programme may use that scope in the critical reflection. The critical reflection is the pre-eminent tool to allow teachers and peers to comment on the contents of the programme. Therefore it must be a document in which teachers and students recognise the programme.

It is imperative that any overlap with assessments within the context of the institutional audit is avoided when drawing up the critical reflection and during the assessment procedure. Should any reference to institutional policy or, for example, departmental policy be necessary, programme assessments strictly focus on the fitness for purpose of the policy pursued regarding the programme in question. This does not include pre-conditional matters, such as the structure of the quality assurance system or the institution's staff policy; these are considered in institutional audits.

The critical reflection comprises a maximum of 15 pages. The required appendices are listed in Chapter 8.

3.4.2 *Achieved learning outcomes*

In order to be able to assess whether the intended learning outcomes are achieved, the panel examines a selection of final projects in accordance with the NVAO guidelines for the assessment of final projects (www.nvao.net).

In many cases, the final thesis constitutes the end-of-course test of a programme. In addition to, or in some cases, in lieu of the final thesis, final projects may involve portfolios, a professional product, an interim exam or a series of interim exams, an article, a creative performance or the like. The programme describes how it tests whether the exit level is achieved. The panel ultimately determines which products or which “range of final achievements” will be assessed as final projects of the programme.

The programme will provide the panel with a full and anonymized list of graduates for the last two completed academic years. This list should, as a minimum, contain: the student numbers, the titles of the final projects, the graduation dates, the modes of study and the locations of the programmes, the results achieved in the final study phase (for example, the assessment mark given for final project(s), mark for oral defence, final mark). The panel will select a minimum of 15 final projects from this list and assess them prior to the site visit. During the site visit, the panel will conduct interviews with assessors/examiners of the programme in order to gain clear insight into the manner in which they arrived at their assessment.

3.4.3 *Site visit*

In principle, the required site visit for the purpose of a limited programme assessment takes one day. In the event of a collective assessment of comparable programmes within a single institution, the duration may be reduced proportionally.

Prior to the visit, the panel members form a preliminary opinion about the programme and draw up questions for their site visit. If relevant, the panel takes the outcomes of the institutional audit into consideration in its judgement.

During the site visit, the assessment panel will, in any case, meet with the programme management, members of the examining board and the programme committee (if required by law), teachers, students, alumni and, wherever relevant, representatives of the professional field. In addition, the panel examines the material made available by the programme. The panel determines the exact scope of the discussions, the possible clustering of discussion participants and the further organisation of the visit. The panel decides at its own discretion which teachers and students it would like to see and which documents it would like to examine. In principle, the programme delegations comprise no more than six persons. The panel will set aside time for open consultations. The programme and the panel will make these open consultations widely known, both prior to and during the visit.

In addition, the panel may visit a representative teaching-learning situation, such in consultation with the programme.

At the end of the site visit, the chair of the assessment panel provides brief and well-balanced feedback information to the programme regarding the findings of the panel.

3.4.4 *Assessment procedure within the assessment panel*

The assessment panel presents its judgement regarding all the standards incorporated in the assessment framework. This judgement is substantiated by an appraisal of the positive and critical elements from the panel's findings.

The assessment is based on the current state of affairs and does not involve an assessment of measures yet to be implemented.

The judgement may be: unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or excellent. The panel subsequently formulates a general, weighted and substantiated judgement regarding the quality of the programme. This judgement is also given on a four-point scale, ranging from unsatisfactory to excellent.

3.4.5 *Assessment report*

The assessment panel secretary draws up a draft assessment report comprising some 15 pages. The main content of the report features the panel's judgements regarding the standards. It is important for the audit panel to include underpinnings based on the programme's critical reflection, the interviews and the underlying data from the documents made available. The report will include significant and representative examples. In its report, the panel gives an account of the manner in which it has organised its visit and how it has arrived at its choice of discussion partners and documents.

The assessment report is preceded by a summary judgement regarding the quality of the programme comprising a maximum of two pages. In a separate paragraph and in the summary, the panel will recommend measures for improvement, if any. In addition, the report contains a score table with the panel judgements, information on the date(s) of the site visit, a brief job description of the panel members, the names of the discussion partners, basic data concerning the programme (see Chapter 8) and an overview of the material studied.

The assessment panel checks whether the name of the programme provides sufficient insight into the contents of the programme and chimes with what is customary within the assessment group or sector to which the programme belongs.

For professional higher education programmes, the panel also gives a judgement on the suffix to be added to the degree.¹¹ Leading in this regard are the reference list from the regulations provided by the Ministry of Education and its elaboration by NVAO (*Government Gazette* 2013, 35337). In accordance with the regulations set down by the Ministry of Education, the panel must substantiate any deviations based on the international recognisability of the suffix to be added to the degree.

The assessment panel secretary forwards the advisory report to the board of the institution once all panel members have approved its contents. The institution is given the opportunity to respond to any factual inaccuracies in the report, whereupon the panel chair endorses the report after all panel members have taken note of and approved its contents. The report is signed by the chair and the secretary of the panel.

¹¹ Higher Education and Research Act, Article 5a.2, paragraph 2a, sub a.

3.5 NVAO decision-making

The board of the institution applies to NVAO for accreditation based on the assessment report. NVAO may decide to accredit the programme, not accredit it or grant an improvement period. The manner in which, the grounds on which and the circumstances under which NVAO may grant an improvement period are set down in Article 5a.12a of the Higher Education and Research Act, the Accreditation Decree of the Higher Education and Research Act and Chapter 12 of this framework.

Because of the limited nature of the assessment, NVAO exercises more reticence in reviewing the assessment report than it does with extensive programme assessments. The positive assessment of the institution inspires sufficient confidence that the quality assurance regarding the quality of the education provided by the institution is effectively guaranteed. In addition, its prior approval of the assessment panels and the fact that these panels' chairs and secretaries have been trained provides sufficient context and certainty to resort to a more reticent review of the assessment report. The review focuses on the completeness and validity of the assessment report.

4 Extensive programme assessment (accreditation)

4.1 Set-up

The framework for extensive assessments of existing programmes is used for institutions that have failed to obtain a positive judgement following an institutional audit. The assessment is based on a discussion with peers regarding the content and quality of the programme. It focuses on six questions:

1. What is the programme aiming for?
2. With what curriculum?
3. With what staff?
4. With what services and facilities?
5. How does the programme intend to safeguard quality?
6. Is the programme achieving its objectives?

These six questions have been translated into six themes and eleven standards. Regarding each of these standards, an assessment panel gives a substantiated judgement on a four-point scale: unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or excellent. The panel subsequently gives a substantiated final conclusion regarding the overall quality of the programme, on the same four-point scale.

4.2 Assessment framework for extensive programme assessments

Intended learning outcomes

Standard 1: *The intended learning outcomes of the programme have been concretised with regard to content, level and orientation; they meet international requirements.*

Explanation: As for level and orientation (bachelor's or master's; professional or academic), the intended learning outcomes fit into the Dutch qualifications framework. In addition, they tie in with the international perspective of the requirements currently set by the professional field and the discipline with regard to the contents of the programme. Insofar as is applicable, the intended learning outcomes are in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations.

Judgement: Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, excellent (weighted and substantiated)

Curriculum

Standard 2: *The orientation of the curriculum assures the development of skills in the field of scientific research and/or the professional practice.*

Explanation: The curriculum has demonstrable links with current developments in the professional field and the discipline.

Judgement: Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, excellent (weighted and substantiated)

Standard 3: *The contents of the curriculum enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.*

Explanation: The learning outcomes have been adequately translated into attainment targets for (components of) the curriculum. Students follow a study curriculum which is coherent in terms of content.

Judgement: Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, excellent (weighted and substantiated)

Standard 4: *The structure of the curriculum encourages study and enables students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.*

Explanation: The teaching concept is in line with the intended learning outcomes and the teaching formats tie in with the teaching concept. Factors pertaining to the curriculum and hindering students' progress are removed as far as possible. In addition, students with a functional disability receive additional career tutoring.

Judgement: Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, excellent (weighted and substantiated)

Standard 5: *The curriculum ties in with the qualifications of the incoming students.*

Explanation: The admission requirements are realistic with a view to the intended learning outcomes.

Judgement: Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, excellent (weighted and substantiated)

Staff

Standard 6: *The staff is qualified and the size of the staff is sufficient for the realisation of the curriculum in terms of content, educational expertise and organisation.*

Explanation: The factual expertise available among the staff ties in with the requirements set for professional or academic higher education programmes.

Judgement: Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, excellent (weighted and substantiated)

Services and facilities

Standard 7: *The accommodation and the facilities (infrastructure) are sufficient for the realisation of the curriculum..*

Judgement: Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, excellent (weighted and substantiated)

Standard 8: *Tutoring and student information provision bolster students' progress and tie in with the needs of students.*

Judgement: Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, excellent (weighted and substantiated)

Quality assurance

Standard 9: *The programme is evaluated on a regular basis, partly on the basis of assessable targets.*

Explanation: The programme monitors the quality of the intended learning outcomes, the curriculum, the staff, the services and facilities, the assessments and the learning outcomes achieved through regular evaluations. The outcomes of these evaluations constitute the basis for demonstrable measures for improvement that contribute to the realisation of the targets. Programme committees, examining boards, staff, students, alumni and the relevant professional field of the programme are actively involved in the programme's internal quality assurance.

Judgement: Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, excellent (weighted and substantiated)

Assessment

Standard 10: *The programme has an adequate assessment system in place.*

Explanation: The tests and assessments are valid, reliable and transparent to the students. The examining board of the programme safeguards the quality of interim and final tests.

Judgement: Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, excellent (weighted and substantiated)

Learning outcomes achieved

Standard 11: *The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.*

Explanation: The level achieved is demonstrated by interim and final tests, final projects and the performance of graduates in actual practice or in subsequent programmes.

Judgement: Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, excellent (weighted and substantiated)

General conclusion

The quality of the programme is

Judgement: Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, excellent (weighted and substantiated)

The assessment is based on the definitions and rules set down in Chapters 10, 11 and 12. The definitions relate to both the scores obtained for the individual standards and the overall scores awarded to the programme.

4.3 Composition of the assessment panel

It is imperative that assessment panels are composed in a manner allowing meaningful discussions among peers, in which the panel remains sufficiently independent. The panel is convened by the institutions that together constitute an assessment group. The institutions appoint a secretary and subsequently present the panel to NVAO for approval. To that end the institutions provide data on the expertise and independence of the panel members and the secretary, in a manner stipulated by NVAO. The composition of assessment panels is covered in Chapter 13 of this framework.

4.3.1 Assessment groups

Under Article 5a.2 paragraph 3a of the Higher Education and Research Act, NVAO places programmes in assessment groups, at the suggestion of the institutions concerned. Before NVAO decides on a programme's placement in an assessment group, the board of the institution concerned is given the opportunity to present its views.

4.4 Assessment process

4.4.1 Critical reflection

For the purpose of the assessment by the assessment panel, the programme presents a critical reflection of the programme. The critical reflection follows the standards outlined for the extensive programme assessment framework and describes the programme's strengths and weaknesses. In its critical reflection, the programme outlines how it checks student and staff satisfaction and reports on the results. Underpinning documents are made available for the panel to inspect. In addition, the report indicates which measures for improvement have been taken following the previous assessment. The critical reflection is a self-contained document that can be read separately.

The critical reflection is the pre-eminent tool to allow teachers and peers to comment on the contents of the programme. Therefore, it must be a document in which teachers and students recognise the programme.

The critical reflection comprises a maximum of 20 pages. The required appendices are listed in Chapter 8.

4.4.2 *Achieved learning outcomes*

In order to be able to assess whether the intended learning outcomes are achieved, the panel examines a selection of final projects in accordance with the NVAO guidelines for the assessment of final projects (www.nvaio.net).

In many cases, the final thesis constitutes the end-of-course test of a programme. In addition to, or in some cases, in lieu of the final thesis, final projects may involve portfolios, a professional product, an interim exam or a series of interim exams, an article, a creative performance or the like. The programme describes how it tests whether the exit level is achieved. The panel ultimately determines which products or which "range of final achievements" will be assessed as final projects of the programme.

The programme will provide the panel with a full and anonymized list of graduates for the last two completed academic years. This list should, as a minimum, contain: the student numbers, the titles of the final projects, the graduation dates, the modes of study and the locations of the programmes, the results achieved in the final study phase (for example, the assessment mark given for final project(s), mark for oral defence, final mark). The panel will select a minimum of 15 final projects from this list and assess them prior to the site visit. During the site visit, the panel will conduct interviews with assessors/examiners of the programme in order to gain clear insight into the manner in which they arrived at their assessment.

4.4.3 *Site visit*

The required site visit for the purpose of an extensive programme assessment takes one day. In the event of a collective assessment of comparable programmes within a single institution, the duration may be reduced proportionally.

Prior to the visit, the panel members form a preliminary opinion about the programme and draw up questions for their site visit.

During the site visit, the assessment panel will, in any case, meet with the programme management, members of the examining board and the programme committee (if required by law), teachers, students, alumni and, wherever relevant, representatives of the professional field. In addition, the panel examines the material made available by the programme. The panel determines the exact scope of the discussions, the possible clustering of discussion participants and the further organisation of the visit. The panel decides at its own discretion which teachers and students it would like to see and which documents it would like to examine. In principle, the programme delegations comprise no more than six persons. The panel will set aside time for open consultations. The programme and the panel will make these open consultations widely known, both prior to and during the visit.

In addition, the panel may visit a representative teaching-learning situation, such in consultation with the programme.

At the end of the site visit, the chair of the assessment panel provides brief and well-balanced feedback information to the programme regarding the findings of the panel.

4.4.4 *Assessment procedure within the assessment panel*

The assessment panel presents its judgement regarding all the standards incorporated in the assessment framework. This judgement is substantiated by an appraisal of the positive and critical elements from the panel's findings.

The assessment is based on the current state of affairs and does not involve an assessment of measures yet to be implemented.

The judgement may be: unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or excellent. The panel subsequently formulates a general, weighted and substantiated judgement regarding the quality of the programme. This judgement is also given on a four-point scale, ranging from unsatisfactory to excellent.

4.4.5 *Assessment report*

The assessment panel secretary draws up an assessment report comprising some 20 pages. The main content of the report features the panel's judgements regarding the standards. It is important for the panel to include underpinnings based on the programme's critical reflection, the meetings with representatives of the programme and the underlying data from the documents made available. The report will include significant and representative examples. In its report, the panel gives an account of the manner in which it has organised its visit and how it has arrived at its choice of discussion partners and documents.

The assessment report is preceded by a summary judgement regarding the quality of the programme, comprising a maximum of two pages. Any measures for improvement will be presented in a separate paragraph and the summary. In addition, the report contains a score table with the panel judgements, information on the date(s) of the site visit, the names of the discussion partners, basic data concerning the programme (see Chapter 8), and an overview of the material studied.

The assessment panel checks whether the name of the programme provides sufficient insight into the contents of the programme and chimes with what is customary within the assessment group or sector to which the programme belongs.

For professional higher education programmes, the panel also gives a judgement on the suffix to be added to the degree.¹² Leading in this regard are the reference list from the regulations provided by the Ministry of Education and its elaboration by NVAO (*Government Gazette* 2013, 35337). In accordance with the regulations set down by the Ministry of Education, the panel must substantiate any deviations based on the international recognisability of the suffix to be added to the degree.

¹² Higher Education and Research Act, Article 5a.2, paragraph 2a, sub a.

The assessment panel secretary forwards the advisory report to the board of the institution once all panel members have approved its contents. The institution is given the opportunity to respond to any factual inaccuracies in the report, whereupon the panel chair endorses the report after all panel members have taken note of and approved its contents. The report is signed by the chair and the secretary of the panel.

4.5 NVAO decision-making

The board of the institution applies to NVAO for accreditation based on the assessment report. NVAO may decide to accredit the programme, not accredit it or grant an improvement period. The Accreditation Decree of the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act stipulates how, on what grounds and under what circumstances NVAO may grant an improvement period.

5 Limited initial accreditation

5.1 Set-up

The framework for limited assessments of new programmes is used for institutions that have obtained a positive judgement following an institutional audit.¹³ The assessment is based on a discussion with peers regarding the content and quality of the programme. It focuses on five questions:

1. What is the programme aiming for?
2. How does the programme intend to achieve its objectives?
3. How does the programme intend to assess its performance?
4. If applicable, are the objectives achieved?¹⁴
5. Does the programme have sufficient financial resources?

These five questions have been translated into five standards. Regarding each of these standards, an assessment panel gives a substantiated judgement on a three-point scale: meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard. The panel subsequently gives a substantiated final conclusion regarding the quality of the programme, also on a three-point scale: positive, negative or conditionally positive.

¹³ Institutions with a positive institutional audit may also opt for the framework relating to extensive initial accreditations outlined in

Chapter 6 of these assessment frameworks.

¹⁴ If the programme has already produced graduates, the panel assesses the achieved learning outcomes.

5.2 Assessment framework for limited initial accreditations

Intended learning outcomes

Standard 1: *The intended learning outcomes of the programme have been concretised with regard to content, level and orientation; they meet international requirements.*

Explanation: As for level and orientation (bachelor's or master's; professional or academic), the intended learning outcomes fit into the Dutch qualifications framework. In addition, they tie in with the international perspective of the requirements currently set by the professional field and the discipline with regard to the contents of the programme.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

Teaching-learning environment

Standard 2: *The curriculum, staff and programme-specific services and facilities enable incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.*

Explanation: The contents and structure of the curriculum enable the students admitted to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The quality of the staff and of the programme-specific services and facilities is essential to that end. Curriculum, staff, services and facilities constitute a coherent teaching-learning environment for the students.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

Assessment

Standard 3: *The programme has an adequate assessment system in place.*

Explanation: The level achieved is demonstrated by interim and final tests. The tests and assessments are valid, reliable and transparent to the students.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

Graduation guarantee and financial provisions

Standard 4: *The institution guarantees students that they can complete the entire curriculum and makes sufficient financial provisions available.*

Explanation: The graduation guarantee spans a reasonable period of time that is related to the length of the programme.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

If applicable: Achieved learning outcomes¹⁵

Standard 5: *The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.*

Explanation: The level achieved is demonstrated by interim and final tests, final projects and the performance of graduates in actual practice or in subsequent programmes.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated)

General conclusion

The assessment panel answers the question of whether the programme meets the quality that, from an international point of view, can reasonably be expected from a higher education bachelor's or master's programme:

Judgement: Positive, negative or conditionally positive (weighted and substantiated)

If the panel pronounces the judgement of conditionally positive, it will explicitly state the relevant conditions and the timeframe within which the conditions must be met. The panel will only pronounce the judgement of conditionally positive if, in its opinion, the institution is able to meet the conditions set within a maximum of two years. The assessment is based on the assessment rules set down in Chapter 11.

If a programme is not entirely new or being reorganised, the achieved learning outcomes are also taken into consideration in the assessment. Cf. paragraph 5.5.

5.3 Composition of the assessment panel

NVAO convenes and appoints the assessment panel that will conduct the initial accreditation. The programme to be assessed is entitled to lodge substantiated objections to the composition of the assessment panel.

It is imperative that assessment panels are composed in a manner allowing meaningful discussions among peers, in which the panel remains sufficiently independent. The composition of assessment panels is covered in Chapter 13 of this framework.

5.4 Assessment process

5.4.1 Information dossier

For the purpose of the assessment by the assessment panel, the programme presents an information dossier regarding the programme. The information dossier should follow the standards outlined for the limited initial accreditation framework. It positions the programme in relation to existing (and new) programmes at home and abroad. The information dossier is a self-contained document that can be read separately.

¹⁵ If the programme has already produced graduates, the panel assesses the achieved learning outcomes.

The framework for limited initial accreditations is structured in a manner allowing programmes ample scope to emphasise their unique character. The programme may use that scope in its information dossier. The information dossier is the pre-eminent tool to allow teachers and peers to comment on the contents of the programme. It must be a document reflecting the commitment of the stakeholders.

It is imperative that any overlap with assessments within the context of the institutional audit is avoided when drawing up the information dossier and during the assessment procedure. Should any reference to institutional policy or, for example, departmental policy be necessary, programme assessments strictly focus on the fitness for purpose of the policy pursued regarding the programme in question. This does not include pre-conditional matters, such as the structure of the quality assurance system or the institution's staff policy; these are considered in institutional audits.

The information dossier comprises a maximum of 15 pages, excluding appendices.

5.4.2 *Achieved learning outcomes*

If the programme has already produced graduates, the achieved learning outcomes are also assessed during the initial accreditation process.

In order to be able to assess whether the intended learning outcomes are achieved, the panel examines a selection of final projects in accordance with the NVAO guidelines for the assessment of final projects (www.nvao.net).

In many cases, the final thesis constitutes the end-of-course test of a programme. In addition to, or in some cases, in lieu of the final thesis, final projects may involve portfolios, a professional product, an interim exam or a series of interim exams, an article, a creative performance or the like. The programme describes how it tests whether the exit level is achieved. The panel ultimately determines which products or which "range of final achievements" will be assessed as final projects of the programme.

The programme will provide the panel with a full and anonymized list of graduates for the last two completed academic years. This list should, as a minimum, contain: the student numbers, the titles of the final projects, the graduation dates, the modes of study and the locations of the programmes, the results achieved in the final study phase (for example, the assessment mark given for final project(s), mark for oral defence, final mark). The panel will select a minimum of 15 final projects from this list and assess them prior to the site visit. During the site visit, the panel will conduct interviews with assessors/examiners of the programme in order to gain clear insight into the manner in which they arrived at their assessment.

5.4.3 *Site visit*

In principle, the required site visit for the purpose of limited initial accreditations takes one day. Prior to the visit, the panel members will jointly have formed a preliminary opinion about the programme and drawn up questions for their site visit. The panel factors the outcomes of the institutional audit into its judgement.

During the site visit, the assessment panel meets with the (prospective) programme management, the (prospective) members of the examining board and the programme committee (if required by law), (prospective) teachers and, wherever relevant,

representatives of the professional field. In addition, the panel examines the material made available by the programme. The panel determines the exact scope of the discussions, the possible clustering of discussion participants and the further organisation of the visit. The panel decides at its own discretion which teachers and students it would like to see and which documents it would like to examine. In principle, the programme delegations comprise no more than six persons.

At the end of the site visit, the chair of the assessment panel provides brief and well-balanced feedback information to the programme regarding the findings of the panel.

5.4.4 *Assessment procedure within the assessment panel*

The assessment panel presents its judgement regarding all the standards incorporated in the assessment framework. This judgement is substantiated by an appraisal of the positive and critical elements from the panel's findings. The panel subsequently formulates a general, weighted and substantiated judgement regarding the quality of the programme.

The assessment panel checks whether the name of the programme provides sufficient insight into the contents of the programme and chimes with what is customary within the assessment group or sector to which the programme is going to belong.

For professional higher education programmes, the panel also gives a judgement on the suffix to be added to the degree.¹⁶ Leading in this regard are the reference list from the regulations provided by the Ministry of Education and its elaboration by NVAO (*Government Gazette* 2013, 35337). In accordance with the regulations set down by the Ministry of Education, the panel must substantiate any deviations based on the international recognisability of the suffix to be added to the degree.

In addition, the panel assesses the CROHO sector classification as proposed by the programme.

5.4.5 *Advisory report*

The assessment panel secretary draws up an advisory report comprising some 15 pages. The main content of the report is made up of the panel's judgements regarding the standards, including underpinnings based on the programme's information dossier, the meetings with representatives of the programme and the underlying data from the documents studied. The report will include significant and representative examples. In the report, the panel gives an account of the manner in which it has organised its visit and how it has arrived at its choice of discussion partners and documents..

The advisory report is preceded by a summary judgement regarding the quality of the programme comprising a maximum of two pages. Any measures for improvement will be presented in a separate paragraph. In addition, the report contains a score table with the panel judgements, information on the date(s) of the site visit, the names of the discussion partners, basic data concerning the programme (see Chapter 8), an overview of the material studied and the declarations of independence signed by the panel members and the secretary.

¹⁶ Higher Education and Research Act, Article 5a.2, paragraph 2a, sub a.

NVAO forwards the advisory report to the board of the institution once all panel members have approved its contents. The institution is given a term of two weeks to respond to any factual inaccuracies in the report, whereupon the panel chair endorses the report after all panel members have taken note of and approved its contents. The report is signed by the chair and the secretary of the panel and submitted to NVAO for decision-making. If NVAO finds that a report raises questions or if an institution so desires, NVAO may invite the programme and/or the assessment panel for further consultations.

5.5 NVAO decision-making

Basically, NVAO can take three decisions: a positive initial accreditation decision, a conditionally positive initial accreditation decision or a negative initial accreditation decision.

NVAO may attach conditions to its decision. In that case, the programme must apply for additional assessment within a maximum of two years, whereupon NVAO ascertains whether the programme meanwhile meets the conditions set. If the programme fails to apply for an additional assessment or does not meet the conditions, the positive decision expires. Satisfaction of the conditions set will be assessed by an assessment panel commissioned by NVAO. The additional assessment will basically be carried out in accordance with the procedure for regular initial accreditations. The assessment panel will focus on the programme's shortcomings identified earlier.

If the initial accreditation involves a programme that, at the time of submission of its application, is actually already engaged in educational activities, the learning outcomes achieved by the students are also assessed in accordance with standard 5 of the assessment framework relating to limited initial accreditations.

6 Extensive initial accreditation

6.1 Set-up

The framework for extensive assessments of new programmes (extensive initial accreditation framework) is used for institutions that have failed to obtain a positive judgement following an institutional audit. The assessment is based on a discussion with peers regarding the content and quality of the programme. It focuses on eight questions:

1. What is the programme aiming for?
2. With what curriculum?
3. With what staff?
4. With what services and facilities?
5. How does the programme intend to safeguard quality?
6. How does the programme intend to assess its performance?
7. If applicable, are the objectives achieved?¹⁷
8. Does the programme have sufficient financial resources?

These eight questions have been translated into eight themes and twelve standards. Regarding each of these standards, an assessment panel gives a substantiated judgement on a three-point scale: meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard. The panel subsequently gives a substantiated final conclusion regarding the quality of the programme, also on a three-point scale: positive, negative or conditionally positive.

¹⁷ If the programme has already produced graduates, the panel assesses the achieved learning outcomes.

6.2 Assessment framework for extensive initial accreditations

Intended learning outcomes

Standard 1: *The intended learning outcomes of the programme have been concretised with regard to content, level and orientation; they meet international requirements.*

Explanation: As for level and orientation (bachelor's or master's; professional or academic), the intended learning outcomes fit into the Dutch qualifications framework. In addition, they tie in with the international perspective of the requirements currently set by the professional field and the discipline with regard to the contents of the programme.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

Curriculum

Standard 2: *The orientation of the curriculum assures the development of skills in the field of scientific research and/or the professional practice.*

Explanation: The curriculum has demonstrable links with current developments in the professional field and the discipline.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

Standard 3: *The contents of the curriculum enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.*

Explanation: The learning outcomes have been adequately translated into attainment targets for (components of) the curriculum. Students follow a study curriculum which is coherent in terms of content.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

Standard 4: *The structure of the curriculum encourages study and enables students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.*

Explanation: The teaching concept is in line with the intended learning outcomes and the teaching formats tie in with the teaching concept. Factors pertaining to the curriculum and hindering students' progress are removed as far as possible. In addition, students with a functional disability receive additional career tutoring.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

Standard 5: *The curriculum ties in with the qualifications of the incoming students.*

Explanation: The admission requirements are realistic with a view to the intended learning outcomes.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

Staff

Standard 6: *The staff is qualified and the size of the staff is sufficient for the realisation of the curriculum in terms of content, educational expertise and organisation.*

Explanation: The factual expertise available among the staff ties in with the requirements set for professional or academic higher education programmes.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

Services and facilities

Standard 7: *The accommodation and the facilities are sufficient for the realisation of the curriculum.*

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

Standard 8: *Tutoring and student information provision bolster students' progress and tie in with the needs of students.*

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

Quality assurance

Standard 9: *The programme is evaluated on a regular basis, partly on the basis of assessable targets.*

Explanation: The programme monitors the quality of the intended learning outcomes, the curriculum, the staff, the services and facilities, the assessments and the learning outcomes achieved through regular evaluations. The programme also collects management information regarding the success rates and the staff-student ratio. Programme committees, examining boards, staff, students, alumni and the relevant professional field of the programme are actively involved in the programme's internal quality assurance.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

Assessment

Standard 10: *The programme has an adequate assessment system in place.*

Explanation: The level achieved is demonstrated by interim and final tests. The tests and assessments are valid, reliable and transparent to the students.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

Graduation guarantee and financial provisions

Standard 11: *The institution guarantees students that they can complete the entire curriculum and makes sufficient financial provisions available.*

Explanation: The graduation guarantee spans a reasonable period of time that is related to the length of the programme.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

If applicable: Achieved learning outcomes¹⁸

Standard 12: *The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.*

Explanation: The level achieved is demonstrated by interim and final tests, final projects and the performance of graduates in actual practice or in subsequent programmes.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

General conclusion

The assessment panel answers the question of whether the programme meets the quality that, from an international point of view, can reasonably be expected from a higher education bachelor's or master's programme.

Judgement: Positive, negative or conditionally positive (weighted and substantiated)

If the panel pronounces the judgement of conditionally positive, it will explicitly state the relevant conditions and the timeframe within which the conditions must be met. The panel will only pronounce the judgement of conditionally positive if, in its opinion, the institution is able to meet the conditions set within a maximum of two years. The assessment is based on the assessment rules set down in Chapter 11.

If a programme is not entirely new or being reorganised, the achieved learning outcomes are also taken into consideration in the assessment. Cf. paragraph 6.5.

6.3 Composition of the assessment panel

NVAO convenes and appoints the assessment panel that will conduct the initial accreditation. The programme to be assessed is entitled to lodge substantiated objections to the composition of the assessment panel.

It is imperative that assessment panels are composed in a manner allowing meaningful discussions among peers, in which the panel remains sufficiently independent. The composition of assessment panels is covered in Chapter 13 of this framework.

6.4 Assessment process

6.4.1 Information dossier

For the purpose of the assessment by the assessment panel, the programme presents an information dossier regarding the programme. The information dossier should follow the standards outlined for the extensive initial accreditation framework. It positions the

¹⁸ If the programme has already produced graduates, the panel assesses the achieved learning outcomes

programme in relation to existing (and new) programmes at home and abroad. The information dossier is a self-contained document that can be read separately.

The information dossier is the pre-eminent tool to allow teachers and peers to comment on the contents of the programme. It must be a document reflecting the commitment of the stakeholders.

In addition, the initial accreditation framework provides the opportunity to discuss the ambitions of the programme during the site visit. What are the choices for the future, where does the programme aim to go? In order to be able to engage in such discussions, the assessment panel is expected to be able to reflect, together with the programme, on the programme's plans for the future.

The information dossier comprises a maximum of 20 pages, excluding appendices.

6.4.2 *Achieved learning outcomes*

If the programme has already produced graduates, the achieved learning outcomes are also assessed during the initial accreditation process.

In order to be able to assess whether the intended learning outcomes are achieved, the panel examines a selection of final projects in accordance with the NVAO guidelines for the assessment of final projects (www.nvao.net).

In many cases, the final thesis constitutes the end-of-course test of a programme. In addition to, or in some cases, in lieu of the final thesis, final projects may involve portfolios, a professional product, an interim exam or a series of interim exams, an article, a creative performance or the like. The programme describes how it tests whether the exit level is achieved. The panel ultimately determines which products or which "range of final achievements" will be assessed as final projects of the programme.

The programme will provide the panel with a full and anonymized list of graduates for the last two completed academic years. This list should, as a minimum, contain: the student numbers, the titles of the final projects, the graduation dates, the modes of study and the locations of the programmes, the results achieved in the final study phase (for example, the assessment mark given for final project(s), mark for oral defence, final mark). The panel will select a minimum of 15 final projects from this list and assess them prior to the site visit. During the site visit, the panel will conduct interviews with assessors/examiners of the programme in order to gain clear insight into the manner in which they arrived at their assessment.

6.4.3 *Site visit*

In principle, the required site visit for the purpose of extensive initial accreditations takes one day. Prior to the visit, the panel members will jointly have formed a preliminary opinion about the programme and drawn up questions for their site visit.

During the site visit, the assessment panel meets with the (prospective) programme management, the (prospective) members of the examining board and the programme committee (if required by law), (prospective) teachers and, wherever relevant, representatives of the professional field. In addition, the panel examines the material made available by the programme. The panel determines the exact scope of the discussions, the

possible clustering of discussion participants and the further organisation of the visit. The panel decides at its own discretion which teachers and students it would like to see and which documents it would like to examine. In principle, the programme delegations comprise no more than six persons.

At the end of the site visit, the chair of the assessment panel provides brief and well-balanced feedback information to the programme regarding the findings of the panel.

6.4.4 *Assessment procedure within the assessment panel*

The assessment panel presents its judgement regarding all the standards incorporated in the assessment framework. This judgement is substantiated by an appraisal of the positive and critical elements from the panel's findings. The panel subsequently formulates a general, weighted and substantiated judgement regarding the quality of the programme.

The assessment panel checks whether the name of the programme provides sufficient insight into the contents of the programme and chimes with what is customary within the assessment group or sector to which the programme is going to belong.

For professional higher education programmes, the panel also gives a judgement on the suffix to be added to the degree.¹⁹ Leading in this regard are the reference list from the regulations provided by the Ministry of Education and its elaboration by NVAO (*Government Gazette* 2013, 35337). In accordance with the regulations set down by the Ministry of Education, the panel must substantiate any deviations based on the international recognisability of the suffix to be added to the degree.

In addition, the panel assesses the CROHO sector classification as proposed by the programme.

6.4.5 *Advisory report*

The assessment panel secretary draws up an advisory report comprising some 20 pages. The main content of the report is made up of the panel's judgements regarding the standards, including underpinnings based on the programme's information dossier, the meetings with representatives of the programme and the underlying data from the documents studied. The report will include significant and representative examples. In the report, the panel gives an account of the manner in which it has organised its visit and how it has arrived at its choice of discussion partners and documents.

The advisory report is preceded by a summary judgement regarding the quality of the programme comprising a maximum of two pages. Any measures for improvement will be presented in a separate paragraph and in the summary of the report. In addition, the report contains a score table with the panel judgements, information on the date(s) of the site visit, the names of the discussion partners, basic data concerning the programme (see Chapter 8), an overview of the material studied and the declarations of independence signed by the panel members and the secretary.

NVAO forwards the advisory report to the board of the institution once all panel members have approved its contents. The institution is given a term of two weeks to respond to any factual inaccuracies in the report, whereupon the panel chair endorses the report after all

¹⁹ Higher Education and Research Act, Article 5a.2, paragraph 2a, sub a.

panel members have taken note of and approved its contents. The report is signed by the chair and the secretary of the panel and submitted to NVAO for decision-making. If NVAO finds that a report raises questions or if an institution so desires, NVAO may invite the programme and/or the assessment panel for further consultations.

6.5 NVAO decision-making

Basically, NVAO can take three decisions: a positive initial accreditation decision, a conditionally positive initial accreditation decision or a negative initial accreditation decision.

NVAO may attach conditions to its decision. In that case, the programme must apply for additional assessment within a maximum of two years, whereupon NVAO ascertains whether the programme meanwhile meets the conditions set. If the programme fails to apply for an additional assessment or does not meet the conditions, the positive decision expires. Satisfaction of the conditions set will be assessed by an assessment panel commissioned by NVAO. The additional assessment will basically be carried out in accordance with the procedure for regular initial accreditations. The assessment panel will focus on the programme's shortcomings identified earlier.

If the initial accreditation involves a programme that, at the time of submission of its application, is actually already engaged in educational activities, the learning outcomes achieved by the students are also assessed in accordance with standard 11 of the assessment framework relating to extensive initial accreditations.

If the initial accreditation involves a programme that, at the time of submission of its application, is not yet engaged in educational activities and that is provided by an institution that has not obtained a positive institutional audit or a conditionally positive institutional audit²⁰, the learning outcomes achieved will be assessed after three years following the initial accreditation, taking into consideration what is desirable and customary at the international level (in accordance with standard 12 of the assessment framework for extensive initial accreditations).

In principle, the original panel will conduct the additional assessment.

If this assessment turns out negative for both or one of the two aspects, the initial accreditation will lapse. In this case, NVAO has the authority to take a decision involving improvement measures in accordance with the provisions set down in Chapter 10 of this framework.

²⁰ Institutions participating in the Implementation Regime regarding the introduction of the institutional audit, as referred to in Article 18.32c of the Higher Education and Research Act, which have not yet obtained an institutional audit decision, are not required to submit to an interim, additional initial accreditation on the two aspects stated above.

7 Distinctive features

7.1 Background

The distinctive features have been incorporated into the accreditation system because they can contribute to the national and international profiling of higher education programmes. A distinctive feature enables institutions to draw attention to aspects that are not directly related to programme levels but involve, for example, the orientation of a programme (such as research master's programmes), objectives such as sustainability or its residential nature.

Distinctive features are assessed on the basis of the following principles:

1. A distinctive feature does not involve an aspect that is also assessed as part of a regular assessment in the context of an institutional audit, accreditation or initial accreditation.
2. The audit panel or assessment panel assesses a distinctive feature by reference to the relevant framework in combination with the criteria set out below. The panel ascertains whether the institution or programme profiling the distinctive feature fulfils its promise.
3. To that end, the panel determines, in consultation with the institution or programme, what standards it will focus on during the assessment.
4. The required comparison with other relevant institutions or programmes is performed by the institution or programme itself.
5. The composition of the assessing panel is geared to the assessment of the distinctive feature.
6. The point of departure is that an institution or programme may apply for assessment of a distinctive feature at any time. However, its accreditation period will not exceed the final date of the original application.
7. A distinctive feature must meet the following criteria:

7.2 Criteria for distinctive features

Distinguishing nature

Criterion 1: *The distinctive feature distinguishes the institution or programme from other relevant institutions or programmes in the Dutch higher education sector.*

Explanation: The institution or programme demonstrates that the distinctive feature has a distinguishing but not necessarily unique nature *vis-à-vis* relevant institutions or programmes in the Dutch higher education sector.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

Concretisation

Criterion 2: *The impact of the distinctive feature on the quality of the education provided has been operationalised on the basis of the relevant standards in the appropriate assessment framework.*

Explanation: The assessing panel indicates which standard(s) it regards as relevant to the realisation of the feature and why. The judgement must demonstrate the operationalisation of the distinctive feature for the relevant standard(s). If a distinctive feature spans several standards in the framework in question, the judgement should provide a concrete and complete assessment of the feature for all standards concerned.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

Relevance

Criterion 3: *The distinctive feature is of essential importance to the profile of the institution or the nature of the programme.*

Explanation: The distinctive feature is sufficiently recognisable within the institution or programme and makes a relevant contribution to the expansion and sharpening of options for students and the labour market.

Judgement: Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).

General conclusion

The distinctive feature is

Judgement: Granted, not granted (weighted and substantiated).

8 Required documents

8.1 Institutional audit

During the assessment process, the institution will provide the audit panel with a limited number of documents. NVAO assumes that these are existing documents, available within the institution, rather than documents prepared especially for the institutional audit. The documents serve as a substantiation and if need be as verification. Other material is only required when explicitly requested by the panel or if the institution wishes to demonstrate a particular distinctive feature.

8.1.1 *Basic data concerning the institution*

(The basic data is incorporated into the critical reflection, the advisory report and the NVAO decision.)

1. Name of the institution;
2. Status of the institution (publicly funded or legal body providing higher education);
3. Location(s);
4. Overview with all programmes, enrolment figures and staff numbers.

8.1.2 *Required appendices to the critical reflection*

(The list with appendices studied will be included in the advisory report.)

1. Mission and/or view regarding the education provided and, if available, the institution's latest strategic policy plan;
2. Organisation chart;
3. Quality assurance plan.

8.1.3 *Documents for inspection during the site visits*

(The list with material studied will be included in the assessment report.)

1. Education policy plan or similar document(s);
2. Staff (policy) plan or similar document(s);
3. Policy plan regarding the accessibility and feasibility for students with a functional disability;
4. Recent examples of relevant management information.

8.2 Accreditation

During the assessment process, the programme provides the assessment panel with a limited number of documents. NVAO assumes that these are existing documents, available within the institution, rather than documents prepared especially for the programme assessment. The documents serve as a substantiation and if need be as verification.

8.2.1 *Basic data concerning the programme*

(The basic data is incorporated into the critical reflection, the assessment report and the NVAO decision.)

Administrative data regarding the programme

1. Nomenclature of the programme in CROHO [central register of higher education programmes];
2. Orientation and level of the programme;
3. For professional higher education programmes, the suffix to be added to the degree. See the regulations provided by the Ministry of Education, the reference list contained therein and its elaboration by NVAO (*Government Gazette* 2013, 35337). Any deviations must be validated by the assessment panel;
4. Number of credits;
5. Specialisations;
6. Location(s);
7. Mode (s) of study: full-time, part-time, work-based learning, three-year tracks for VWO graduates enrolling in bachelor's programmes with professional orientation;
8. Joint programme (if applicable), stating the partner institutions involved and the type of degree awarded (joint/double/multiple degree);
9. Language of instruction;
10. CROHO registration number.

Administrative data regarding the institution

1. Name of the institution;
2. Status of the institution (publicly funded or legal body providing higher education);
3. Outcome of the institutional audit.

8.2.2 *Required appendices to the critical reflection*

(Institutions may also choose to provide appendices in digital format only. The list of appendices studied and the quantitative data will be incorporated into the assessment report.)

1. Subject-specific reference framework and the learning outcomes of the programme;
 2. Overview of the curriculum in diagram form;
 3. Outline description of the curriculum components, stating learning outcomes, attainment targets, teaching method(s), assessment method, literature (mandatory/recommended), teacher and credits;
 4. Teaching and examination regulations;
- (Items 2 to 4 are usually reflected in a study guide, in which case this can be annexed to the report or be provided in digital format..)

5. Overview of allocated staff with names, positions, scope of appointment, level and expertise;
6. A full and anonymized list of graduates for the last two completed academic years. This list should, as a minimum, contain: the student numbers, the titles of the final projects, the graduation dates, the modes of study and the locations of the programmes, the results achieved in the final study phase (for example, the assessment mark given for final project(s), mark for oral defence, final mark). (The selection and assessment procedure is set down in the NVAO guidelines for the assessment of final projects (www.nvao.net));
7. Drop-out rates, success rates and/or average duration of studies of graduates;
8. Teacher -student ratio achieved;
9. Teacher quality (proportion of teachers holding a master's degree and proportion of teachers holding a PhD);
10. Average amount of face-to-face instruction per course year.

8.2.3 Documents made available during the site visit (limited programme assessments)

(Institutions may also choose to provide appendices in digital format only. The list of material studied will be incorporated into the assessment report.)

1. The annual report by the examining board and the reports by the programme committee (if a programme committee is required);
2. Test questions with relevant assessment criteria and mark system (answer models);
3. A representative selection of reference books and other study materials.

These are all existing documents. The documents listed above suffice. Providing more than the above documents is not necessary.

8.2.4 Documents made available during the site visit (extensive programme assessments)

(The list of material studied will be incorporated into the assessment report.)

1. Educational policy plan or similar document(s);
2. Quality assurance plan;
3. Policy plan regarding the accessibility and feasibility for students with a functional disability;
4. Summary and analysis of recent evaluation results and a recent example of relevant management information;
5. Documentation regarding teacher and student satisfaction;
6. Reports on consultations in relevant committees / bodies;
7. Test questions with relevant assessment criteria and mark system (answer models) and a representative selection of actual tests administered (such as presentations, work placements, portfolio assessments) and assessments;
8. A representative selection of reference books and other study materials.

8.3 Initial accreditation

8.3.1 *Basic data concerning the programme*

(The basic data is incorporated into the information dossier, the advisory report and the NVAO decision.)

Administrative data regarding the programme

1. Nomenclature of the programme;
2. Orientation and level of the programme;
3. Proposal for placement in an assessment group;
4. The suffix to be added to the degree. For professional higher education programmes, see the regulations provided by the Ministry of Education, the reference list contained therein and its elaboration by NVAO (*Government Gazette* 2013, 35337). Any deviations must be validated by the assessment panel;
5. Proposal regarding CROHO sector classification (validated by the assessment panel);
6. Number of credits;
7. Specialisations;
8. Joint programme (if applicable), stating the partner institutions involved and the type of degree awarded (joint/double/multiple degree);
9. Location(s);
10. Mode(s) of study).

Administrative data regarding the institution

1. Name of the institution;
2. Status of the institution (publicly funded or legal body providing higher education);
3. Outcome of the institutional audit.

8.3.2 *Required appendices to the information dossier*

(The list of appendices studied and the quantitative data will be incorporated into the advisory report.)

1. Subject-specific reference framework and the learning outcomes of the programme;
2. Overview of the curriculum in diagram form;
3. Detailed description of the curriculum components for the first year, specifying for each component the objectives, teaching method, teaching concept, workload, assessment format and the relation to research or the professional field, stating learning outcomes, attainment targets, teaching method(s), assessment method, literature (mandatory/recommended), teacher and credits;
4. Teaching and examination regulations;
5. Overview of staff to be allocated with names, positions, scope of appointment, level and expertise;
6. If so required, the macro-efficiency decision;
7. Overview of the contacts maintained with the professional field (if relevant);
8. Intended staff-student ratio;
9. Intended number of face-to-face hours for each course year.

8.3.3 *Documents made available during the visit (limited initial accreditation)*
(The list of material studied will be incorporated into the advisory report.)

1. Reference books and other study materials.

8.3.4 *Documents made available during the visit (extensive initial accreditation)*
(The list of material studied will be incorporated into the advisory report.)

1. Educational policy plan or similar document(s);
2. Policy plan regarding research in relation to the programmes offered or similar document(s);
3. Staff (policy) plan or similar document(s);
4. Services and facilities plan or similar document(s);
5. Policy plan regarding the accessibility and feasibility for students with a functional disability;
6. Quality assurance plan;
7. Reports on consultations in relevant committees / bodies;
8. Reference books and other study materials.

9 Modes of study and locations

9.1 Modes of study and locations

For programmes offering various modes of study (for example, full-time, part-time, work-based learning or three-year tracks for VWO graduates enrolling in a bachelor's programme with professional orientation), the assessment must demonstrate that the generic quality of each mode of study and/or track is assured, based on the standards in the relevant assessment framework, in order to arrive at a positive final conclusion regarding the programme.

Programmes that are offered at various locations under a single CROHO registration only qualify for accreditation if the assessment shows that each location meets the generic quality standards stated in the relevant framework.

10 Programme assessment scales

The following definitions are used in the assessment of programmes. These definitions pertain to both the scores obtained for the individual standards and the overall scores awarded to the programme.

Each judgement is illustrated with a number of examples to assist in its operationalisation.

Examples that apply exclusively to extensive programme assessments are marked “EPA”.

10.1 Generic quality

The quality that, from an international point of view, can reasonably be expected from a higher education bachelor's or master's programme.

10.2 Unsatisfactory

The programme does not meet the current generic quality standards and shows serious shortcomings in several areas.

This could be operationalised as follows:

- The level and/or orientation of the learning outcomes do not fit within the (inter)national qualification frameworks and have not been concretised into subject- or programme-specific performance levels.
- The aggregate of curriculum, staff, services and facilities does not constitute an environment conducive to learning.
- The programme lacks a programme-wide, transparent and coherent assessment policy.
- The intended learning outcomes are not being achieved.
- Quality assurance in the programme is not pursued in a systematic manner, which translates into a lack of improvement policy (EPA).

10.3 Satisfactory

The programme meets the current generic quality standards and demonstrates an acceptable level across its entire spectrum.

This could be operationalised as follows:

- The level and/or orientation of the learning outcomes fit within the (inter)national qualification frameworks and have been concretised into subject- or programme-specific performance levels.
- The aggregate of curriculum, staff, services and facilities constitutes an environment conducive to learning which enables students to achieve the learning outcomes.
- The programme has developed a programme-wide, transparent and coherent assessment policy.
- The intended learning outcomes are achieved.
- Quality assurance in the programme is pursued in a systematic manner, which translates into a consistent improvement policy (EPA).

10.4 Good

The programme systematically surpasses the current generic quality standard.

This could be operationalised as follows:

- The level and/or orientation of the learning outcomes fit within the (inter)national qualification frameworks and have been concretised into subject- or programme-specific performance levels that exceed the current standards.
- The combination of curriculum and staff constitutes a challenging learning environment.
- The programme has developed a programme-wide, transparent and coherent assessment policy, which serves as an example to other programmes.
- The learning outcomes achieved translate into products that are systematically above average.
- Quality assurance in the programme is pursued in a systematic manner, which translates into a consistent improvement policy that is reflected in a growing quality culture (EPA).

10.5 Excellent

The programme systematically well surpasses the current generic quality standards across its entire spectrum and is regarded as an international example.

This could be operationalised as follows:

- The level and/or orientation of the learning outcomes fit within the (inter)national qualification frameworks and have been concretised into subject- or programme-specific performance levels. These are given a specific interpretation based on the programme's explicit and unique views. The programme serves as an example internationally.
- The aggregate of curriculum and staff constitutes a challenging, innovative and original learning environment.
- The learning outcomes achieved are of excellent quality and translate into awards and (inter)national publications.
- Quality assurance in the programme is pursued in a systematic manner, which translates into a consistent improvement policy and a strong ability for self-reflection. This is reflected in a robust quality culture (EPA).

11 Assessment rules

11.1 Programme assessments

Limited programme assessments

- The final conclusion regarding a programme will always be “unsatisfactory” if standards 1, 3 or 4 are judged “unsatisfactory”. In case of an unsatisfactory score on standard 1, NVAO cannot grant an improvement period.
- The final conclusion regarding a programme can only be “good” if at least two standards are judged “good”; one of these must be standard 4.
- The final conclusion regarding a programme can only be “excellent” if at least two standards are judged “excellent”; one of these must be standard 4.

Extensive programme assessments

- The final conclusion regarding a programme will always be “unsatisfactory” if standards 1, 10 or 11 are judged “unsatisfactory”. In case of an unsatisfactory score on standard 1, NVAO cannot grant an improvement period.
- The final conclusion regarding a programme can only be “good” if at least five standards are judged “good”; one of these must be standard 11.
- The final conclusion regarding a programme can only be “excellent” if at least five standards are judged “excellent”; one of these must be standard 11.

Limited initial accreditations

- The final conclusion regarding a programme will always be “unsatisfactory” if standards 1, 3 or 5 (if applicable) are judged “unsatisfactory”. In case of an unsatisfactory score on standards 1 or 3, NVAO cannot grant a conditional initial accreditation.

Extensive initial accreditations

- The final conclusion regarding a programme will always be “unsatisfactory” if standards 1, 10 or 12 (if applicable) are judged “unsatisfactory”. In case of an unsatisfactory score on standards 1 or 10, NVAO cannot grant a conditional initial accreditation.

11.2 Institutional audit

- The final conclusion following institutional audits will always be “negative” if standards 1 or 4 are judged “does not meet the standard”.

12 Improvement and conditional assessment

In this chapter, NVAO outlines the rules laid down by implementing regulations [in Dutch: AMVB] regarding conditional decisions and the granting of improvement periods. The Dutch Higher Education and Research Act [WHW] stipulates that implementing regulations be formulated to specify the conditions under which and the situations in which improvement periods may be granted in the accreditation of programmes (Article 5a.12a, first paragraph), the conditional initial accreditation of programmes (Article 5a.11, fourth paragraph) and conditional institutional audits (Article 5a.13d, sixth paragraph). In this document, this implementing regulation is referred to as: Accreditation Decision under the Higher Education and Research Act (*Government Gazette* 2011, 536).

12.1 Conditional initial accreditations and institutional audits

NVAO may attach conditions to an initial accreditation or institutional quality assurance assessment if, on the basis of the advice submitted by a panel of experts, it arrives at the conclusion that certain quality aspects are unsatisfactory but can reasonably be remedied within a maximum timeframe of two years. With regard to initial accreditations, this pertains to both extensive and limited assessments (Article 5a.10a, second paragraph, and Article 5a.13g, first paragraph). In a conditional initial accreditation of institutional quality assurance assessment, the conditions in question relate to the efforts expected from the board of the institution to improve the quality aspects that are assessed as unsatisfactory as well as the manner in which these efforts must be expended, the manner in which and the timeframe within which the board of the institution must ultimately report on these efforts to NVAO and the communication by the board of the institution to the students and other stakeholders regarding the conditions set. The timeframe to be observed for reporting must logically follow the timeframe allowed to implement the improvements. A timeframe shorter than two years may be set if, in the opinion of NVAO, the improvements may be realised sooner. Communication is important because students must be informed to the full when selecting a study programme. This information is also relevant to others, such as employers with whom the institution maintains a special relationship and who employ many graduates.

An initial accreditation application must be denied if the standards of “Intended learning outcomes” or “Testing” are judged unsatisfactory.

An initial accreditation application involving a programme that, at the time of submission of its application, is actually already engaged in educational activities must be denied if both aspects:

1. the learning outcomes achieved, taking into consideration what is desirable and customary at the international level, and
2. the validity of the assessment, testing and examination of the students are judged negative.

An additional initial accreditation as referred to in Chapter 6 will turn out negative if both of these aspects are judged unsatisfactory. In this case, the initial accreditation expires. In such cases, however, NVAO has the authority to grant an improvement period of a maximum of two years. Cf. the paragraph on Improvement periods below.

An application for an institutional audit must be denied if the standards of “View of the quality of the education provided” or “Improvement policy” are judged unsatisfactory. In those cases, a conditional initial accreditation or institutional audit cannot be granted.

12.2 Improvement period for accreditation

If the assessment of an application for the renewal of an existing accreditation or accreditation following an initial accreditation decision demonstrates that the programme does not meet all the required quality aspects, NVAO may decide to renew the existing accreditation or initial accreditation and grant a so-called “improvement period”. This pertains to both extensive and limited programme assessments. NVAO also has this authority with respect to additional assessments as referred to in Article 5a.10a, fourth paragraph, of the Higher Education and Research Act. An improvement period may only be granted if, in the opinion of NVAO, the deficiencies may reasonably be remedied within a timeframe of no more than two years. The assessment report submitted by the assessment panel is essential in this respect. However, if the standard of ‘Intended learning outcomes’ is judged unsatisfactory, an improvement period cannot be granted and the application for accreditation must be denied. This is because a programme’s ambitions level must be at least up to par. Generic quality is not guaranteed in programmes whose intended exit level is sub-standard; thus, they lack a critical quality culture and vision, the basis for good-quality higher education of world-class standards. In such cases, granting an improvement period is uncalled for.

Before NVAO decides to grant an improvement period, it gives the institution the opportunity to draw up a plan for improvement. The institution will have this plan assessed by a panel of independent experts; in many cases, this may be the panel that has conducted the initial assessment. Publicly funded institutions will submit their plan for improvement to the programme committee of the programme concerned for advice. The advisory report by the programme committee is appended to the plan for improvement. A decision to grant an improvement period goes into effect on the day it is taken.

NVAO may set conditions when granting an improvement period. In terms of content and function, these conditions correspond to the conditions that may be attached to initial accreditations and institutional audits. The difference from conditional initial accreditations and institutional audits, however, is that the board of the institution is required to submit a new application to NVAO no later than six months before the end of the improvement period, viz. an application for a decision to determine whether the programme meets the accreditation framework as yet (Article 5a.12a, fourth and fifth paragraphs of the Act).

As is the case with conditional initial accreditations or institutional audits, an improvement period may be shorter than two years if, in the opinion of NVAO, improvement may be achieved within a shorter space of time. The assessment panel reviews the manner in which the institution has remedied the deficiencies identified by NVAO and determines whether the programme meanwhile scores satisfactorily on all the statutory quality aspects.

By analogy with Article 5a. 2, second paragraph of the Act, the assessment panel that reviews the improvement must be approved by NVAO, as does the assessment panel that originally assessed the programme. The assessment panel that reviews the improvement

comprises, as a minimum, two domain experts from the panel that originally assessed the programme.

13 Composition of panels

13.1 Composition of the panel for institutional audits

NVAO convenes and appoints an audit panel to conduct the institutional audit. The institution to be assessed is entitled to lodge substantiated objections to the composition of the audit panel.

Audit panels must meet the following requirements:

1. the panel is composed of at least four members, including one student;
2. the panel commands administrative, educational and audit expertise, is acquainted with developments in the higher education sector at home and abroad, and is authoritative;
3. one of the members with administrative expertise will act as chair;
4. the panel is independent (its members have had no ties with the institution to be assessed over at least the past five years).

The audit panel is counselled by an NVAO process co-ordinator and supported by a secretary. The secretary and the process co-ordinator are also independent of the institution in question. The secretary and the process co-ordinator do not sit on the panel.

Prior to the first visit, all panel members and the secretary certify to not maintaining any connections or ties with the institution in question, of either a personal or a professional nature, which could affect an independent judgement in either a positive or a negative sense, and to not having had such connections or ties with the institution during the past five years.

In addition to the factual independence, as expressed above in the nature of the relationship and the number of years, it is essential for any prospective panel member or secretary to feel independent. In some cases, an independence of more than five years may not provide sufficient guarantee for an independent position; a prospective panel member or secretary could still experience too strong a relationship with the institution or, for example, be involved too closely with an institution or programme because of family ties. In such cases, the prospective panel member or secretary cannot sit on the panel. Panel membership requires a professional attitude. To that end, NVAO has formulated a code of conduct for panel members and secretaries. Panel members and secretaries will sign the code of conduct beforehand; after the assessment process, they will sign a declaration drafted by NVAO that the assessment has been carried out independently.

Stakeholders such as panel members, staff or students may report to NVAO any matters arising during the assessment process that could affect the independence of the assessment.

13.2 Composition of assessment panels

Assessment panels assessing existing programmes in the context of a limited or extensive programme assessment are convened by the institutions that together constitute an assessment group. The institutions appoint a secretary and subsequently present the panel

to NVAO for approval. To that end the institutions provide data on the expertise and independence of the panel members and the secretary, in a manner stipulated by NVAO.

Institutions may also commission an external quality assessment agency to convene a panel for the assessment of existing programmes. In such cases the panel must also be presented to NVAO for approval. External assessment agencies presenting a panel for approval must be authorised in writing by the institution(s) concerned.

Applications for approval of a panel must be submitted at least three months prior to the panel's first visit. NVAO decides on the application within four weeks.

If the board of the institution is unable to convene a panel of experts, in collaboration with other institutions within an assessment group, NVAO will make a binding recommendation regarding the composition of the assessment panel.

NVAO convenes and appoints the assessment panel that will conduct the assessment pertaining to limited or extensive initial accreditations. The programme to be assessed is entitled to lodge substantiated objections to the composition of the assessment panel.

With a view to a thorough assessment of the quality of existing programmes and the review of new programmes, it is imperative that assessment panels are composed in an expert manner allowing meaningful discussions among peers, in which the panel remains sufficiently independent.

Assessment panels must meet the following requirements:

1. The panel is composed of a minimum of four members, among whom at least two authoritative domain experts²¹ and a student;
2. Overall, the panel commands the following expertise:
 - a. expertise regarding developments in the discipline,
 - b. international expertise,
 - c. practical expertise in the professional field relevant to the programme (if applicable),
 - d. educational expertise: recent experience in teaching or educational development, testing expertise at the relevant programme level and with regard to the orientation (professional or academic) of the programme, expertise regarding the teaching format(s) used in the programme²²,
 - e. student-related expertise,
 - f. assessment or audit expertise;
3. The panel is independent (its members have not had any ties with the institution providing the programme for at least the past five years);
4. The panel chair is trained by NVAO.

²¹ Domain expertise is understood to mean specialist expertise, international expertise or professional expertise.

²² This includes, for example, distance learning, work-related courses, flexible education, skill-oriented education or education aimed at excellent students. Testing expertise can be demonstrated by, for example, certificates such as BKO/SKO/BKE/SKE or participation in, for example, testing and examining boards.

5. The panel is assisted by an independent secretary trained by NVAO. The secretary does not sit on the panel.

Prior to the visit, all panel members and the secretary certify to not maintaining any connections or ties with the institution in question, either as a private individual or as a researcher / teacher, professional or adviser, which could affect an independent judgement of the quality of the programme in either a positive or a negative sense, and to not having had such connections or ties with the institution during the past five years.

In addition to the factual independence, as expressed above in the nature of the relationship and the number of years, it is essential for any panel member or secretary to feel independent. In some cases, an independence of more than five years may not provide sufficient guarantee for an independent position; a prospective panel member or secretary could still experience too strong a relationship with the institution or, for example, be involved too closely with an institution or programme because of family ties. In such cases, the prospective panel member or secretary cannot sit on the panel. Panel membership requires a professional attitude. To that end, NVAO has formulated a code of conduct for panel members and secretaries. This code of conduct comprises components pertaining to the independence and demeanour of the panel members and secretary as well as the confidentiality to be maintained during the assessment process.

Panel members and secretaries will sign a declaration of independence and confidentiality prior to the assessment process. In this declaration, they attest to having taken note of the code of conduct. Following the assessment process, the chair and secretary sign the assessment report once all panel members have read and approved the report. The report includes a declaration that the assessment has been carried out independently.

The NVAO guidelines "Requirements regarding panel composition" elaborate the requirements set for the composition of assessment panels. The guidelines also comprise a submission procedure, a form to be filled out by the institution and a code of conduct for panel members and secretaries.

Stakeholders such as panel members, staff or students may report to NVAO any matters arising during the assessment process that could affect the independence of the assessment or pertain to other complaints regarding the panels or secretaries.

14 Admission to the system: aggravated, extensive initial accreditations

The old recognition procedure lapsed when the Management Enforcement Legislative Act took effect. It has been replaced by a procedure for legal bodies aiming to provide an accredited (undergraduate or postgraduate) programme for the first time. When this is the first programme provided by the legal body concerned, the programme will be subjected to a so-called aggravated, extensive initial accreditation procedure.²³

This procedure is part of the process related to admission to the higher education system. In this case, the legal body must demonstrate, in addition to the requirements pertaining to extensive initial accreditations, that it has safeguarded the quality and continuity of the programme applying for initial accreditation. This means that the legal body seeking to be admitted to the system must provide the following guarantees: continuity must be safeguarded, it must observe statutory regulations and it must deliver (proven) quality. This can only be demonstrated if the legal body to be assessed has been providing actual education for some time (the so-called full cycle requirement).

NVAO will assess the (first) programme provided by the legal body seeking admission to the higher education system by means of an extensive initial accreditation procedure, in which, at any rate, the quality achieved will also be reviewed. Consequently, it is not a mere ex-ante assessment, because it involves proven quality. This is the aggravation in the procedure.

NVAO assesses the quality of the programme concerned; the Inspectorate of Education assesses the quality and continuity of the legal body, including its compliance with legislation and regulations. Upon completion of the procedure, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science will subsequently decide on admission to the higher education system.

General points of departure:

- The procedure is intended for institutions (legal bodies) that are not yet providing accredited programmes or initially accredited new programmes (undergraduate or postgraduate programmes); the programmes must be provided by the legal body itself;
- NVAO assesses the programme by means of a so-called aggravated, extensive initial accreditation procedure;
- The aggravation involves the fact that it is not an ex-ante assessment: it is a matter of proven quality (full cycle requirement); the quality achieved is also reviewed;
- Following a positive judgement from NVAO, the legal body subsequently submits an application to the Minister of Education, Culture and Science for permission to award degrees²⁴;
- The Minister of Education, Culture and Science subsequently requests advice from the Inspectorate of Education regarding the continuity and quality of the legal body.
- Upon receipt of the advice, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science decides on the request for permission to award degrees (i.e., request for admission to the system).

²³ New Article 5a.8 of the Higher Education and Research Act. Meanwhile renumbered to Article 5a.10a, fifth paragraph.

²⁴ Cf. the Policy Rule on Authorisations to Award Higher Education Degrees, Government Gazette 2010, no. 14710

15 Appeals

Before making a decision regarding an institutional audit, limited programme assessment, extensive programme assessment, limited initial accreditation, (aggravated) extensive initial accreditation or additional initial accreditation, NVAO allows the board of the institution a term of two weeks to present its views concerning the intended decision. These two weeks fall within the statutory time frame of six months (for institutional audits, limited initial accreditations and extensive initial accreditations) or three months (for limited programme assessments and extensive programme assessments) within which NVAO is required to make its decision.

Once ratified, the decision is immediately forwarded to the board of the institution. At the same time, NVAO publishes its decision by placing it on its web site.

NVAO decisions are open to appeal.

Stakeholders may lodge an internal appeal with NVAO. The time frame for lodging internal appeals is six weeks. The processing of the appeal involves a hearing. NVAO makes its decision within twelve weeks after receiving the appeal. A decision after appeal may be postponed for no more than six weeks. Such postponement is communicated in writing. The appeals procedure is subject to the General Administrative Law Act (AWB) and the Appeals Procedure Regulations AWB NVAO.

NVAO decisions after appeal are open to external appeals with the administrative court and the Administrative Jurisdiction Department of the Council of State. The time frame for lodging external appeals is six weeks. Pending the internal or external appeal procedure, the competent administrative court may be requested to make provisional arrangements if urgency, due to the interests involved, so requires.

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Annex 4

Assessment framework
for the higher education
accreditation system of
the Netherlands 2016

Overview of standards
and assessment rules
frameworks 2014-2016

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	2. Overview of standards and assessment rules frameworks 2014-2016



Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands

September 2016

Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands

September 2016

Introduction

With the *Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands* to assess the quality of higher education programmes and institutions, the Dutch quality assurance system has entered the next phase. The new framework establishes a significant optimisation, befitting the character of our current era. Furthermore, the framework is geared to a quality assurance system that is based on trust in the existing, high quality of Dutch higher education.

Within the statutory framework of the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (WHW), the system aims to endorse staff and student ownership of the programmes and to reduce the administrative burden of the accreditation process for programmes and institutions. At the same time, the system must be sufficiently robust to safeguard the quality of programmes and institutions, be able to enforce improvement, and render the quality offered visible to students, employers, and society.

The previous two Dutch accreditation systems came into force in 2002 and in 2011. The accreditation system will enter its third phase in 2017, concurrently with the start of the second round of the institutional audit. The first round of institutional audits has made a significant contribution to the establishment of quality assurance systems at the institutional level and a quality culture in the field of education. The second round will be focused on assessing the robustness of the aforementioned quality assurance system and the associated procedures, and whether a sustained quality culture has been established within the institutions. In that case, a positive judgement on all the standards will confirm trust in the institution.

The second round of institutional audits thus constitutes a key building block for a system based on trust. The institutional audit framework has been reviewed from this perspective and now offers room for the further development of a system in which trust is the point of departure.

The new assessment framework comprises a single set of standards for new and existing programmes, both academic and professional programmes, at the Associate Degree, Bachelor's, and Master's levels. The assessment rules and other instructions and guidelines contained in the framework have been cut down and simplified. This reflects the principle that a tailor-made approach and individual substantiation by the programmes and institutions determine how the assessment procedures will be fleshed out within the scope offered by the framework.

Its open structure and elaboration enhance the flexibility of the quality assurance system and reduce the associated administrative burden. The framework takes both trust and self-confidence as its points of departure. Existing documents will suffice to demonstrate the quality, expertise and knowledge of those who substantiate the education provided. This means that institutions and programmes will not be required to provide more than is outlined in this framework.

The assessment framework ties in with the criteria set down in the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (European Standards and Guidelines - ESG). It sketches the criteria underpinning the quality assurance system of the Dutch higher education sector.

The framework continues to observe the peer review system as the best method to verify quality. The assessments are carried out on the basis of an approach and mindset that befit evaluation by peers. The panel of independent and authoritative experts enters into an open dialogue with the institution regarding quality. The self-evaluation report informs the panel of the reflective cycle in place at the institution to safeguard and continually improve its quality: from philosophy, aims and objectives to implementation, from evaluation and results to improvement and development.

The framework expressly calls for attention to be paid to quality culture and its embedding, always in interconnection with quality assurance tools.

The framework is based on respect for the autonomy of the institutions that bear primary responsibility for their quality. The vision, aims and objectives of the institution or programme constitute the starting point for the assessment and will not be assessed in terms of content. The point of departure is that students and staff substantiate the education provided and the programme, sharing an important responsibility to this end as “owners”. However, society as a whole is also an owner and stakeholder of education: good and accessible higher education is essential for a sustained and well-balanced development of present-day society, from both an economic and a societal perspective.

The framework has been established following consultations with the umbrella organisations for publicly funded and private universities, universities of applied sciences, quality assessment agencies, student organisations, employers’ organisations, and unions, with input from many parties involved in educational practice.

The following chapters set out the framework. Chapter 1 pertains to the institutional audit. Chapter 2 pertains to programme assessments of both existing and new programmes. Chapter 3 outlines the procedure for the other assessments. Chapter 4 deals with the options for internal and external appeals. Chapter 5 pertains to the publication of the framework.

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1 Institutional audits

1.1 Introduction

An institutional audit is a periodic, external, and independent assessment of the quality assurance in place at an institution. Internal quality assurance comprises both the quality culture and the internal quality assurance system of an institution. The audit serves to determine whether the institution's internal quality assurance system, in interconnection with its quality culture, safeguards the realisation of its individual vision of good education.

A quality assurance system comprises simple, univocal, and verifiable aims and objectives, procedures to safeguard quality, embedding of the Plan Do Check Act (PDCA) cycle in the organisation, “*hard controls*”, periodic evaluations, and systematic monitoring of improvements. Quality culture refers to a distinct and manifested vision, a shared focus on improvements, leadership, accountability and “*soft controls*”, cooperation and self-management, (academic) professionalism, student commitment, and an external orientation. Both dimensions of focusing on and pursuing a good quality of education are considered in the institutional audit. The institution demonstrates the effectiveness of its own synergy between the two dimensions, which allows it room to choose its own balance. In this framework, the term “quality assurance” expressly refers to both dimensions: the quality assurance system and the quality culture.

The key question is: is the institution safeguarding the realisation of its vision of good education, and is the institution continuously working on development and improvement?

This key question is answered on the basis of four coherent questions that constitute the point of departure for the institutional audit:

1. Are the institution's vision and policy concerning the quality of the education it provides widely supported and sufficiently coordinated, both externally and internally?
2. How does the institution realise this vision of quality?
3. How does the institution monitor that its vision of quality is realised?
4. How does the institution work on improvement?

In the framework, the above questions have been translated into four standards:

1. Vision and policy
2. Implementation
3. Evaluation and monitoring
4. Focus on development

The four standards constitute a “reflective cycle” on the basis of which the institution demonstrates that all its departments observe a strong quality culture focused on development, and follow up policy results. The quality culture is supported by an efficient internal quality assurance system that continually safeguards the quality of the education it provides.

With the institutional audit, the institution gives account to society regarding the soundness of its assurance of the quality of the education it provides, and demonstrates its safeguarding of sustained quality development.

The Dutch Higher Education and Research Act requires that attention be paid to facilities that further accessibility and practicability for students with a functional impairment.

The point of departure for the institutional audit is the institution's well-defined, shared, and propagated vision of good education. The vision itself is not assessed in terms of content during the audit. The institution is autonomous and develops an individual vision of good education that must be properly geared to the expectations and requirements of the professional field, peers, students, and society. The institution and its staff and students support and develop this vision based on an external orientation and in consultation with civic society.

The open nature of the framework underscores the autonomy of the institution and its own responsibility for the quality it provides. The open nature contributes to the ownership of its teachers and students. By reference to the open standards, the panel reflects on the institution's vision of good education in the meetings, the manner in which it is substantiated, the evaluation, and the results. The use of open standards offers scope for diversity in the implementation and set-up of an institution's educational policy, including between different sections of the institution if so desired.

Sustained and systematic embedding of internal quality assurance in previous years is taken into consideration in the assessment of applications for extension of the validity of institutional audit decisions.

The institutional audit is conducted by an external panel of independent experts (peer review). The panel members are appointed by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO). The panel ascertains whether the institution has an adequate quality assurance system in place to safeguard the quality of its programmes and a quality culture that encourages all those involved to strive for (continued) quality development.

1.2 Standards

Philosophy and policy

Standard 1: The institution has a broadly supported educational philosophy and pursues a corresponding policy focused on the internal quality assurance of its education.

The institution holds a well-defined view of good education which is shared in all its departments. Teachers and students support this philosophy, and develop it in mutual consultation and in concert with external stakeholders. Periodical coordination with the relevant (changing) environment ensures the topicality of this philosophy. The educational philosophy has been translated into explicit points of departure for quality assurance. In accordance with the ESG, the educational philosophy is student-oriented (student-centred learning).

Implementation

Standard 2: The institution realises its educational philosophy in an effective manner, which is demonstrated by appropriate policy actions and processes, particularly relating to staff, student assessment, services and facilities, and students with a functional impairment.

The philosophy has been appropriately translated into concrete policy actions and processes. The institution has processes in place for the design, recognition, and quality assurance of its programmes in keeping with the European Standards and Guidelines, and demonstrates the effectiveness and application of such processes by means of a track record. Students and staff co-own the policy and contribute to its realisation on the basis of the shared philosophy. This commitment demonstrates how the institution realises its intended quality culture.

Implementation is consistent with the philosophy: staff, student assessment, and services and facilities further the accessibility and practicability of the education provided.

Evaluation and monitoring

Standard 3: The institution systematically evaluates whether the intended policy objectives relating to educational quality are achieved. Relevant stakeholders are involved in this process.

The institution organises effective feedback that supports the realisation of its policy. To that end, it initiates appropriate evaluation and measurement activities that are stably embedded in the institution. These tools provide insightful information that can be used for the formulation of desired quality development. The tools comprise a transparent method for identifying and reporting risks, taking action where needed, with a focus on improvement. Reflection on the output forms part of the organisational model, and provides sufficient insight into the effectiveness of the policy implementation in all tiers of the organisation and staff participation.

Since the measurement and evaluation activities revolve around effectiveness, they do not need to be uniform across the entire institution.

Students, staff, alumni and experts from the professional field are actively involved in the evaluations. The institution publishes accurate, up-to-date and accessible information regarding the evaluation results.

Development

Standard 4: The institution has a focus on development and works systematically on the improvement of its education.

Feedback and reflection on output constitute the basis for measures targeted at reinforcing, improving, or adjusting policy or its implementation. Following up on measures for improvement is embedded in the organisational structure. The development policy pursued by the institution encourages all the parties concerned to contribute to innovation and quality improvement.

Internal and external stakeholders have been informed regarding the developments that are primed on the basis of the evaluation outcomes. The institution pursues continuous improvement, adapts to the (changing) circumstances, and conforms to the expectations of students and employers.

1.3 Panel judgements and assessment rules

Judgement per standard: <i>The panel scores each standard according to the following scale:</i>	
	<p>Meets the standard: the institution meets the standard;</p> <p>Partially meets the standard: the institution meets the standard to a significant extent, but improvements are needed in order to fully meet the standard. Conditions for improvement are set down (see <i>Conditions</i> below);</p> <p>Does not meet the standard: the institution does not meet the standard.</p>
Assessment rules for final conclusion regarding the institution:	
	<p>Positive: the institution meets all the standards.</p> <p>Conditionally positive: a judgement of “partially meets the standard” for a maximum of two standards, with conditions set down.</p> <p>Negative: the institution fails to meet one or more standards and additionally “partially meets” three or more other standards.</p>
Conditions:	
	<p>When the panel reaches the final conclusion of “conditionally positive”, it recommends one or more conditions. The panel only recommends the imposition of conditions when their realisation is realistic and feasible within a maximum term of two years. NVAO decides on the conditions to be imposed. If the imposition of conditions is not realistic and feasible, the final conclusion will be “negative”.</p> <p>The panel sets down concrete recommendations regarding the conditions to be satisfied in order to meet the standards.</p>
Recommendations:	
	With respect to each standard, the panel may make suggestions for improvements. In its report, these suggestions are clearly separated from the substantiation of the judgements.

Assessment of specific aspects:

The institution may choose to have a specific, institution-wide aspect assessed concurrently with the institutional audit. For example: a distinctive feature or specific quality assurance activities pursued by the institution. Agreements on this are made during the Board consultations (see below). The assessment of a specific aspect results in an additional audit trail and/or the addition of specific expertise to the panel. The institution must substantiate the aspect concerned in its application. The panel assesses this aspect and provides advice. NVAO may ratify this judgement. NVAO may exclude an application regarding assessment of a specific, institution-wide aspect from its procedure when such aspect falls beyond its competencies (see Chapter 3).

1.4 Assessment process

1.4.1 Submission of applications

The institution must submit an application to NVAO by means of a letter or email. When the institution wishes to extend the validity of an existing institutional audit (re-application), such application must be submitted at least one year prior to expiry of the institutional audit.

1.4.2 Board consultations

Upon receipt of the application, NVAO initiates consultations with the Board of the institution. The Board consultations involve an introduction to and explanation of the institutional audit. Examples of the topics that could be discussed during the consultations are: the institution's organisational structure and profile, the (international) composition of the panel and the language to be used in conducting the audit, the timeframe, the format and scope of the self-evaluation report, points for attention with respect to the assessment, wishes with respect to the organisation of the site visits, and the material available in the institution for the purpose of the audit.

Prior to the Board consultations, the accreditation portrait is forwarded to the institution. This accreditation portrait presents an overview of the results of the accreditations and initial accreditations carried out in recent years. NVAO takes account of the diversity in organisational forms and of the institution's specific nature. Representatives of students and staff from the participatory bodies or (student) involvement bodies applicable to the institution will be involved in the Board consultations.

1.4.3 Panel composition

Following the Board consultations, NVAO appoints the panel that will conduct the institutional audit. Subsequently, the institution to be audited has a period of two weeks to inform NVAO of any substantiated objections to the composition of the panel.

The experts conducting institutional audits are independent of the institution (for at least five years, they have had no direct nor indirect ties with the institution to be audited that would lead to a conflict of interest), they are authoritative at the administrative level or within the development of higher education, they command auditing expertise, or they represent the professional field. Prior to the assessment, the panel members sign a declaration of independence.

The panel members jointly command the following expertise:

- administrative expertise;
- higher education expertise, preferably including with respect to developments beyond the Netherlands;
- expertise regarding the structure and effectiveness of quality assurance systems;
- representative of the students
- representative of the social sphere or, as the case may be, the professional field;
- as the occasion arises, expertise related to the specific aspect(s) applied for.

In consultation with the institution, the panel is composed of a maximum of five members, one of whom is a student member. It is supported by a secretary and an NVAO process coordinator. One of the panel members with administrative expertise acts as Chair.

NVAO provides all panel members with a briefing and/or training course specifically aimed at institutional audits.

The panel conducts a peer review, i.e., consultation/assessment by peers occupies centre stage. The panel's attitude and working methods correspond to this point of departure. This means, for example, that the panel operates on the basis of trust and respects the principles of the institution, conducts an open dialogue with the institution, does justice to the various perspectives of quality, and contributes to improvement.

1.4.4 Self-evaluation report and other documents

The institution draws up a self-evaluation report, outlining its strengths and weaknesses. The self-evaluation report is submitted to the representative council or participatory body/bodies appropriate to the institution for advice. The self-evaluation report is a self-contained document comprising a maximum of 50 pages (excluding appendices). The advice by the representative council forms part of the self-evaluation report. The institution may contact NVAO to agree on another format or scope for the self-evaluation report (see *Board Consultations* above).

The institution selects other documents that will be made available for perusal by the panel prior to the site visit. The contents and format of such documents are not subject to any prior requirements. The point of departure is that the institution provides the documents and information that the panel requires in order to carry out its duties. Existing material is used wherever possible. In principle, NVAO leaves it up to the institution and the panel to decide in mutual consultation which information is required to form a proper judgement. If need be, NVAO may give a binding decision.

The institution must forward its self-evaluation report with appendices to NVAO no later than six weeks prior to the panel's first site visit.

1.4.5 Site visits

In principle, the panel conducts two site visits: an exploratory visit and an in-depth visit. The first and the second visit are at least four weeks apart. During the first visit, the panel forms a general picture of the institution. During the second visit, at least two audit trails are conducted to gain more in-depth insight.

One trail involves an in-depth study into the effectiveness of the institution's quality assurance and the risk management of programmes. The panel selects a few programmes, based on which it investigates the structure of the quality assurance system, risk identification, and the monitoring of the results across all the tiers of the organisation. In addition, the panel defines the theme issues for the in-depth audit trail(s) at the end of the preparatory visit. In the event of a re-application, the findings of the previous visit are taken into consideration to this end.

In the event of a re-application for an institutional audit and if so requested by the institution, NVAO may decide to have the first and second visit take place consecutively, for example, if the audit is conducted by an international panel.

When the visits will take place consecutively, NVAO informs the institution four weeks prior to the visit of the topics to be considered in the audit trail(s). In such cases, time will be allocated in the schedule for the discussion of topics or issues that are found during the visit to require a more in-depth examination.

During the Board consultations, institutions are free to submit any requests regarding the organisation of the site visits.

Panel preparation

Prior to the first exploratory visit, the panel will have perused the institution's self-evaluation report and accreditation portrait.

In a preparatory internal consultation, the panel discusses the self-evaluation report and the underlying documents. In addition, the panel formulates the questions it intends to pose to the discussion partners, during the first visit, and sets down its approach.

First visit: exploration

During the exploratory visit, the panel becomes acquainted with the institution. During this visit, the panel meets with various bodies, including the supervisory board, the board of the institution, managers qualified to teach, staff responsible for quality assurance and other relevant staff members, teachers from representative bodies, students from representative bodies, and representatives from the social sphere.

In addition, time is set aside for open consultations. The open consultations offer all the staff members of the institution the opportunity to present, in confidence, their own views on the quality assurance in place in the institution. Prior to the visit, the institution will make these open consultations widely known. Anyone who wishes to avail him/herself of this opportunity may apply to the panel secretary by email.

The process coordinator contacts the institution to discuss the organisation of the site visit and the announcement of the open consultations. At the end of the first visit, the panel chair provides brief feedback to the institution. This feedback reflects the panel's first impressions and indicates the audit trails to be conducted.

Second visit: in-depth study

During the in-depth visit to the institution, the audit trails are conducted. An audit trail enables the panel to ascertain whether its first impressions were correct. The topics to be considered during the audit trails are specified under "Site visits". Audit trails may adopt either a horizontal or a vertical approach to the organisation. "Horizontal" trails examine the implementation or monitoring of a specific aim or objective or aspect in a specific tier of the organisation, e.g., all the faculties. "Vertical" trails follow the implementation in "the line" across all the organisational layers. The trail focusing on how programmes monitor quality assurance is "vertical" in nature. The assessment of a "specific" aspect (see paragraph 1.3) requires an additional trail.

Within the panel, judgements are formed on a peer-by-peer basis. Equal justice is done to the various perspectives of quality represented on the panel, including the student perspective. In this respect, the panel strives for consensus.

At the end of the in-depth visit, the Chair provides brief feedback regarding the panel's preliminary findings. The final findings are included in the advisory report.

1.4.6 Advisory report

The panel secretary draws up an advisory report comprising a maximum of 30 pages.

This report contains a summary of the panel's findings and considerations underpinning the judgement. The essence of the report comprises, with respect to each standard: the substantiated findings of the panel, the considerations, the judgement, any assessment of specific aspects, recommendations and conditions, if any.

The panel bases its substantiation on the self-evaluation report, the meetings with representatives of the institution, and findings based on the documents studied.

The report opens with a brief, concise summary aimed at a wider reading public. The report closes with a score table reflecting the judgements on each standard and a well-reasoned final conclusion. The appendix comprises the composition of the panel and brief CV descriptions of the panel members, the approach adopted by the panel, the dates and schedules of the site visits (including names and positions of the discussion partners, save the names of the participants in the open consultations), and a list of the documents examined.

The Chair will endorse the draft report after the panel members have approved its contents. The institution receives this draft report in order to correct any factual inaccuracies within a period of two weeks. The panel will incorporate the response provided by the institution. Subsequently, the Chair will endorse the final report, after all the panel members have approved it.

1.5 Decision-making by NVAO

NVAO forms an opinion about the advisory report, thereby considering consistency, panel approach, procedural requirements, substantiation and weighting in order to ascertain that the panel recommendations have been substantiated in a thorough, proper, and verifiable manner, and that the panel has reached its judgement in a consistent manner. NVAO may invite the panel chair (and possibly other panel members) to provide an explanation. NVAO informs the institution about these consultations and may invite the institution to attend. Institutions may also express to NVAO their need for an explanation.

Based on the panel advisory report and the explanation, if any, NVAO forms a substantiated and independent opinion. The decision may be: positive; conditionally positive, or negative. The institution is given the opportunity to respond to factual inaccuracies in the intended decision.

A conditionally positive decision involves NVAO setting down one or more conditions. NVAO specifies the time frame within which the institution must provide the information required to assess whether the conditions have been met, so that re-assessment can take place within two years. The time frame is set down in the limited validity of the institutional audit.

Institutions that have (conditionally) passed the institutional audit may avail themselves of the limited frameworks for accreditations and initial accreditations for the term of its validity.

Publication

NVAO publishes its decision regarding the institutional audit and the advisory report on its website.

Withdrawal of applications

The institution is free to withdraw its application during the entire assessment procedure, up to such time as NVAO has taken a final decision – in the manner set out in the Dutch General Administrative Law Act – and has published such decision.

1.6 Assessment of the condition(s)

In a conditionally positive decision, NVAO sets out the conditions to be met and the time frame within which they have to be met. In addition, it specifies a deadline for the submission of documents by the institution demonstrating that the conditions have been met. In principle, the same panel will assess whether the conditions have been met. NVAO may decide to change the composition of the panel. The panel decides on the approach to be adopted for the assessment.

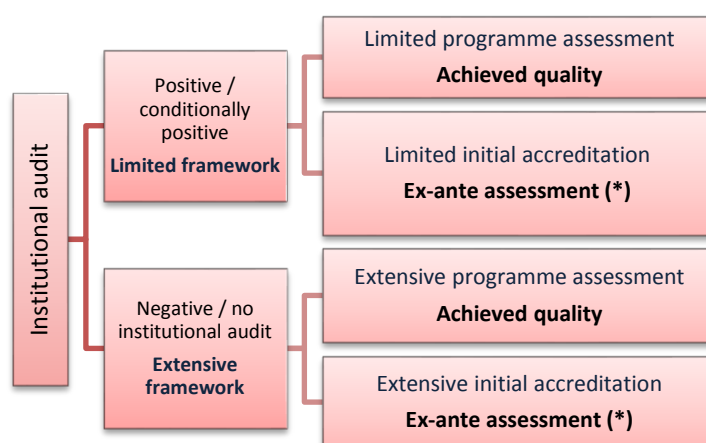
The organisation of the assessment is coordinated between the panel, the institution, and NVAO. The panel submits an advisory report to NVAO. For more details, see the provisions regarding the advisory report and decision-making by NVAO.

2 Programme assessment

2.1 Introduction

The framework for programme assessments pertains to academic higher education programmes, professional higher education programmes at Bachelor's and Master's levels, and Associate Degree programmes (AD programmes).

With respect to programme assessments, the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) makes a distinction between the assessment of **existing programmes (accreditation)** and the assessment of **new programmes (initial accreditation)**. The **limited framework** is used if the institution holds a positive or conditionally positive decision regarding its institutional audit. In all other cases, the **extensive framework** is dictated.



(*) See *Exception: ex-ante assessment* in Paragraph 2.3, Initial accreditations.

2.2 Existing programmes

The assessment of existing programmes focuses on the quality achieved. The programme must demonstrate that its educational practice meets the standards. The assessment is aimed at the intended learning outcomes, the structure of the curriculum, the learning environment, student assessment, the teaching staff, and the achieved learning outcomes.

2.3 Initial accreditations

The assessment of new programmes (initial accreditation) involves an ex-ante assessment. This assessment is focused on plans, pre-conditions, and, wherever applicable, achieved quality. The plans must have been elaborated to a sufficient extent in order to give the panel a clear picture of the intended learning outcomes, the set-up of the curriculum, the learning environment, the assessment and examination of students, and the staff team that is going to teach the programme. The set-up of the first-year curriculum (60 ECs) must be described in detail. Furthermore, the panel will meet with the development team and/or the intended staff to discuss the substantiation of the remaining curriculum components, and the realisation and assessment of the intended learning outcomes.

Exception: ex-ante assessment in initial accreditations

If the initial accreditation involves a programme that is actually already being taught, the achieved learning outcomes are assessed on the basis of interim tests and, if available, final projects. For formal reasons (first registration on the Central Register of Higher Education Programmes, CROHO), such programmes are subjected to initial accreditation. Cf. *Explanation: Initial accreditation, extensive assessment of achieved learning outcomes after three years.*

Limited versus extensive framework

When the limited framework is used, the panel is requested to avoid any overlap with the institutional audit. The limited framework is focused on the substantive quality of the programme, including the required learning environment and the teaching staff. Topics that are left out of consideration are: institution-wide quality assurance and quality culture aspects, the staff policy pursued by the institution, services and facilities, and alignment with the institution's strategy. After all, these aspects have already been assessed during the institutional audit. The extensive framework, on the other hand, also considers the embedding of the programme in the institution's policy, the services and facilities, quality assurance and quality culture.

2.4 Limited frameworkIntended learning outcomes

Standard 1: The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.

The intended learning outcomes demonstrably describe the level of the programme (Associate Degree, Bachelor's, or Master's) as defined in the Dutch qualifications framework, as well as its orientation (professional or academic). In addition, they tie in with the regional, national or international perspective of the requirements currently set by the professional field and the discipline with regard to the contents of the programme. Insofar as is applicable, the intended learning outcomes are in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations.

Teaching-learning environment

Standard 2: The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

The intended learning outcomes have been adequately translated into educational objectives of (components of) the curriculum. The diversity of the students admitted is taken into account in this respect. The teachers have sufficient expertise in terms of both subject matter and teaching methods to teach the curriculum, and provide appropriate guidance. The teaching-learning environment encourages students to play an active role in the design of their own learning process (*student-centred approach*). Programme-specific services and facilities are assessed, unless they involve institution-wide services and facilities already reported on during the institutional audit.

Student assessment

Standard 3: The programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place.

The student assessments are valid, reliable and sufficiently independent. The requirements are transparent to the students. The quality of interim and final examinations is sufficiently safeguarded and meets the statutory quality standards. The tests support the students' own learning processes.

Achieved learning outcomes

Standard 4: The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.
(Cf. paragraph on initial accreditations, Exception: ex-ante assessment in initial accreditations.)

The achievement of the intended learning outcomes is demonstrated by the results of tests, the final projects, and the performance of graduates in actual practice or in post-graduate programmes.

The programme must describe how it tests the achievement of the exit level. Such tests may be based on various products or examinations that are summarised here in the concept of a final project. A non-exhaustive account of final projects is: the final thesis, a portfolio, a professional product, an interim exam or series of interim exams, a paper, an artistic achievement, or a combination thereof.

The panel assesses a minimum of 15 final projects of the programme, selected on the basis of a list of student numbers with the information required to make an adequate selection. Modes of study, locations, specialisations, graduation tracks, and curricula are represented in the selection to such an extent as to identify any differences in quality. This may require an expansion of the number of final projects to be assessed. The programme enables the panel to form an opinion of these final projects and their assessment by the programme, prior¹ to the site visit. During the site visit, the panel interviews assessors/examiners of the programme in order to gain proper insight into the ways in which the assessment has come about and the achievement of the exit level is monitored.

2.4.1 Supplementary for initial accreditations

- The panel, and by extension NVAO, comment on the allocation of the programme to a CROHO sector²;
- In the event of a professional higher education programme, the panel, and by extension NVAO, comment on an appropriate suffix to the degree conferred by the programme.

¹ In exceptional cases, the panel may examine the final projects during the site visit (for example, in the event of performing arts).

² The Central Register of Higher Education Programmes (CROHO) distinguishes the following sectors: Education, Agriculture and the Natural Environment, Science, Engineering and Technology, Health Care, Economics, Law, Behaviour and Society, Language and Culture, and Cross-sector Programmes.

2.4.2 Panel judgements and assessment rules, limited framework

The panel bases its recommendations on the following assessment rules:

	Existing programmes:	Initial accreditations:
Judgement per standard: <i>The panel scores each standard according to the following scale:</i>		
	“Unsatisfactory”, “Satisfactory”, “Good” or “Excellent” (see <i>Definition of Judgements</i>).	“Does not meet the standard”, “Partially meets the standard” or “Meets the standard” (see <i>Definition of Judgements</i>).
Assessment rules for overall judgement on the programme:		
	<p>Excellent: a judgement of “Excellent” with respect to at least two standards, one of which must be standard 4, and a judgement of at least “Satisfactory” with respect to the remaining standards (see explanation of Excellent).</p> <p>Good: a judgement of “Good” with respect to at least two standards, one of which must be standard 4, and a judgement of at least “Satisfactory” with respect to the remaining standards.</p> <p>Satisfactory: a judgement of “Satisfactory” with respect to at least two standards, one of which must be standard 1, and improvement of the shortcoming(s) identified under the standards scored “unsatisfactory” must be realistic and feasible within two years (see <i>Improvement period</i>).</p> <p>Unsatisfactory: i) standard 1 is scored “unsatisfactory”; or ii) one or two standards are scored “unsatisfactory” and improvement within two years is neither realistic nor feasible; or iii) three or more standards are scored “unsatisfactory”.</p>	<p>Positive: the programme meets all the standards.</p> <p>Conditionally positive: a judgement of “Partially meets the standard” with respect to no more than two standards, with conditions being imposed.</p> <p>Negative: ‘a judgement of “Does not meet the standard” with respect to one or more standards and a judgement of “Partially meets the standard” with respect to three or more other standards.</p>
	Improvement period	Conditions
	When the panel reaches a final conclusion of “Satisfactory” and one or two standards are scored “Unsatisfactory”, yet improvement of the shortcoming(s) is realistic and feasible within a maximum of two years, it may recommend that an improvement period be imposed. NVAO decides on the imposition of improvement periods. When the imposition of an improvement period is neither realistic nor feasible, the final conclusion will be “Unsatisfactory”. The panel sets down concrete recommendations regarding the shortcomings to be removed in order to satisfy the conditions.	When the panel reaches a final conclusion of “Conditionally positive”, it also recommends one or more conditions. The panel only recommends the imposition of conditions if their achievement is realistic and feasible within a maximum term of two years. NVAO decides on the imposition of conditions. When the imposition of conditions is neither realistic nor feasible, the final conclusion will be “Negative”. The panel sets down concrete recommendations regarding the conditions to be satisfied in order to meet the standards.

2.5 Extensive framework

Intended learning outcomes

Standard 1: The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.

The intended learning outcomes demonstrably describe the level of the programme (Associate Degree, Bachelor's, or Master's) as defined in the Dutch qualifications framework, as well as its orientation (professional or academic). In addition, they tie in with the regional, national or international perspective of the requirements currently set by the professional field and the discipline with regard to the contents of the programme. Insofar as is applicable, the intended learning outcomes are in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations. The points of departure for the set-up of the programme chime with the educational philosophy and the profile of the institution. The intended learning outcomes are periodically evaluated.

Curriculum: orientation

Standard 2: The curriculum enables the students to master appropriate (professional or academic) research and professional skills.

The curriculum ties in with current (international) developments, requirements and expectations in the professional field and the discipline. Academic skills and/or research skills and/or professional competencies are substantiated in a manner befitting the orientation and level of the programme.

Curriculum: content

Standard 3: The contents of the curriculum enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

The learning outcomes have been adequately translated into educational objectives of (components of) the curriculum.

Curriculum: learning environment

Standard 4: The structure of the curriculum encourages study and enables students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

The curriculum is designed in a manner conducive to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. The teaching-learning environment encourages students to play an active role in the design of their own learning process (student-centred approach). The design of the learning environment chimes with the educational philosophy of the institution.

Intake

Standard 5: The curriculum ties in with the qualifications of the incoming students.

The admission requirements in place are realistic with a view to the intended learning outcomes.

Staff

Standard 6: The staff team is qualified for the realisation of the curriculum in terms of content and educational expertise. The team size is sufficient.

The teachers have sufficient expertise in terms of both subject matter and teaching methods to teach the programme. The staff policy is conducive in this respect. Sufficient staff is available to teach the programme and tutor the students.

Facilities

Standard 7: The accommodation and material facilities (infrastructure) are sufficient for the realisation of the curriculum.

The accommodation of the programme and the facilities are in keeping with the intended learning outcomes and the teaching-learning environment.

Tutoring

Standard 8: The tutoring of and provision of information to students are conducive to study progress and tie in with the needs of students.

Students receive appropriate tutoring (including students with a functional impairment). The information provision of the programme is adequate.

Quality assurance

Standard 9: The programme has an explicit and widely supported quality assurance system in place. It promotes the quality culture and has a focus on development.

The programme organises effective periodic feedback that supports the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Existing programmes implement appropriate improvements based on the results of the previous assessment. They initiate appropriate evaluation and measurement activities to that end. The outcomes of this evaluation demonstrably constitute the basis for development and improvement. Within the institution, those responsible are held to account regarding the extent to which the programme contributes to the attainment of the institution's strategic goals. Quality assurance ensures the achievement of the intended learning results. The programme committee, examination board, staff, students, alumni and the relevant professional field are actively involved in the programme's internal quality assurance. The programme's design processes, its recognition, and its quality assurance are in keeping with the European Standards and Guidelines. The programme publishes accurate, reliable information regarding its quality, which is easily accessible to the target groups.

Student assessment

Standard 10: The programme has an adequate student assessment system in place.

The student assessments are valid, reliable and sufficiently independent. The quality of interim and final examinations is sufficiently safeguarded and meets the statutory quality standards. The tests support the students' own learning processes.

Achieved learning outcomes

Standard 11: The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

(In initial accreditations, this standard is only assessed if the programme is actually taught and achievement of the learning results by graduates is verifiable; see *Exception: ex-ante assessment, initial accreditations*. In all other cases, the assessment is postponed until three years after the commencement of the programme. See *Initial accreditation, extensive assessment of achieved learning outcomes after three years*.)

The achievement of the intended learning outcomes is demonstrated by the results of tests, the final projects, and the performance of graduates in actual practice or in post-graduate programmes.

The programme must describe how it tests the achievement of the exit level. Such tests may be based on various products or examinations that are summarised here in the concept of a “final project”. A non-exhaustive account of final projects is: the final thesis, a portfolio, a professional product, an interim exam or series of interim exams, a paper, an artistic achievement, or a combination thereof.

The panel assesses a minimum of 15 final projects of the programme, selected on the basis of a list of student numbers with the information required to make an adequate selection. The selection comprises a reasonable balance between satisfactory, good, and very good final projects. In addition, modes of study, locations, specialisations, graduation tracks, and curricula are represented in the selection to such an extent as to identify any differences in quality. This may require an expansion of the number of final projects to be assessed. The programme enables the panel to form an opinion of these final projects and their assessment by the programme, prior³ to the site visit. During the site visit, the panel interviews assessors/examiners of the programme in order to gain proper insight into the ways in which the assessment has come about and the achievement of the exit level is monitored.

2.5.1 Supplementary for initial accreditations:

- The panel, and by extension NVAO comment on the allocation of the programme to a CROHO sector⁴;
- In the event of a professional higher education programme, the panel, and by extension NVAO, comment on an appropriate suffix to the degree conferred by the programme.

Explanation: initial accreditation, extensive assessment of achieved learning outcomes after three years

In the event of an initial accreditation application for a programme that, at the time of application, is not yet providing actual education, and the institution involved does not (yet) hold a positive or conditionally positive decision regarding an institutional audit, the following quality aspects will be assessed three years after initial accreditation has been granted:

- a. the level achieved, with a view to what is desirable and customary in an international perspective, and
- b. the validity of the assessment, testing, and examination of the students.

The assessment will be conducted by an independent panel that has been approved by NVAO. The institution must forward the assessment report to NVAO no later than two and a half years after the initial accreditation decision.

2.5.2 Panel judgements and assessment rules, extensive framework

The panel bases its recommendations on the following assessment rules:

³ In exceptional cases, the panel may examine the final projects during the site visit (for example, in the event of performing arts).

⁴ The Central Register of Higher Education Programmes (CROHO) distinguishes the following sectors: Education, Agriculture and the Natural Environment, Science, Engineering and Technology, Health Care, Economics, Law, Behaviour and Society, Language and Culture, and Cross-sector Programmes.

	Existing programmes:	Initial accreditations:
Judgement per standard: <i>The panel scores each standard according to the following scale:</i>		
	“Unsatisfactory”, “Satisfactory”, “Good” or “Excellent” (see <i>Definition of Judgements</i>).	“Does not meet the standard”, “Partially meets the standard” or “Meets the standard” (see <i>Definition of Judgements</i>).
Assessment rules for overall judgement on the programme:		
	<p>Excellent: a judgement of “Excellent” with respect to at least five standards, one of which must be standard 11, and a judgement of at least “Satisfactory” with respect to the remaining standards (see explanation of Excellent).</p> <p>Good: a judgement of “Good” with respect to at least five standards, one of which must be standard 11, and a judgement of at least “Satisfactory” with respect to the remaining standards.</p> <p>Satisfactory: a judgement of at least “Satisfactory” with respect to at least six standards, one of which must be standard 1, and improvement of the shortcoming(s) identified under the standards scored “unsatisfactory” must be realistic and feasible within two years (see <i>Improvement period</i>).</p> <p>Unsatisfactory: i) standard 1 is scored “unsatisfactory”; or ii) at least six standards are scored “unsatisfactory” and improvement within two years is neither realistic nor feasible; or iii) less than six standards are scored “satisfactory”.</p>	<p>Positive: the programme meets all the standards.</p> <p>Conditionally positive: the programme meets at least six standards and partially meets the remaining standards, with conditions being imposed (see <i>Conditions</i>).</p> <p>Negative: ‘a judgement of “Does not meet the standard” with respect to one or more standards and a judgement of “Meets the standard” with respect to less than six standards.</p>
	Improvement period	Conditions
	When the panel reaches a final conclusion of “Satisfactory” and one or two standards are scored “Unsatisfactory”, yet improvement of the shortcoming(s) is realistic and feasible within a maximum of two years, it may recommend that an improvement period be imposed. NVAO decides on the imposition of improvement periods. When the imposition of an improvement period is neither realistic nor feasible, the final conclusion will be “Unsatisfactory”. The panel sets down concrete recommendations regarding the shortcomings to be removed in order to satisfy the conditions.	When the panel reaches a final conclusion of “Conditionally positive”, it also recommends one or more conditions. The panel only recommends the imposition of conditions if their achievement is realistic and feasible within a maximum term of two years. NVAO decides on the imposition of conditions. When the imposition of conditions is neither realistic nor feasible, the final conclusion will be “Negative”. The panel sets down concrete recommendations regarding the conditions to be satisfied in order to meet the standards.

2.6 Definition of judgements standards

Generic quality:	The quality that, in an international perspective, may reasonably be expected from a higher education Associate Degree, Bachelor's or Master's programme.
Existing programmes	
Unsatisfactory:	The programme does not meet the generic quality standard and shows shortcomings with respect to multiple aspects of the standard. The panel may suggest an improvement period (see <i>Improvement period</i>).
Satisfactory:	The programme meets the generic quality standard across its entire spectrum.
Good:	The programme systematically surpasses the generic quality standard.
Excellent:	The programme systematically well surpasses the generic quality standard and is regarded as an international example (see <i>Explanation: Excellent</i>).
New programmes, initial accreditations	
Does not meet the standard:	The new programme does not meet the generic quality standard.
Partially meets the standard:	The new programme meets the generic quality standard to a significant extent, but improvements are required in order to fully meet the standard(s). As a point of departure, conditions will be imposed in order to achieve such improvements (exceptions are outlined under <i>Assessment rules for overall judgement on the programme</i> , in both the limited framework and the extensive framework).
Meets the standard:	The new programme meets the generic quality standard.

Explanation: Excellent

In its report, the panel provides a convincing substantiation of any judgement of "Excellent". To this end, the programme must demonstrate that it can be regarded as an international "best practice". The panel will request additional documentation if so required to substantiate its judgement.

2.7 Assessment process for existing programmes

2.7.1 Application

Applications for accreditation must be submitted no later than the deadline set for applications from the assessment cluster to which the programme has been assigned. The advisory report of the panel is part of the application for accreditation.

2.7.2 Assessment in assessment clusters

Existing programmes are assessed in assessment clusters. NVAO assigns programmes to an assessment cluster (on the recommendation of the institution) and sets the date for submission of applications. Application regulations and amendments are published on the NVAO website.⁵

⁵ NVAO processes applications and amendments once a year (April round).

Prior to the accreditation process, programmes may meet with NVAO as a sector to discuss matters such as comparative assessments in the cluster, the accreditation framework, substantive issues, and working agreements to ensure efficiency in the accreditation process.

2.7.3 Self-evaluation and appendices

The institution draws up a self-evaluation report describing the programme's strengths and weaknesses. The report is a self-contained document comprising a maximum of 15 pages (limited framework) / 20 pages (extensive framework), excluding appendices. Agreements may be made with the panel regarding another format or scope for the self-evaluation report. In addition to a self-evaluation, existing evaluative documents of the programmes may also be used. The standards from the assessment framework must be reducible, for example, by means of an explanation. The self-evaluation comprises a chapter submitted by students and/or recommendations by the programme committee. The programme encourages the establishment of an independent and representative student chapter.

The programme appends a limited number of appendices to its self-evaluation. These appendices provide insight into the set-up and/or contents of the curriculum, the composition of the staff team, and the teaching and examination regulations.

The panel requests additional documents and information if so required in order to form an opinion. The point of departure is that the programme submits the documents and information that the panel requires to carry out its tasks. However, the panel will exercise restraint in this respect and refrain from requesting information other than that already available with the programme.

2.7.4 Panel composition

The peers conducting programme assessments are independent, authoritative in their discipline, and jointly command the following expertise:

- up-to-date knowledge of the relevant discipline;
- (recent) teaching and testing experience in the same type of education (professional higher education / academic higher education, Master's / Bachelor's / Associate Degree programmes);
- ability to compare the programme in an international perspective;
- experience in the (international) professional field of the discipline concerned;
- experience with peer reviews in higher education;
- if applicable: knowledge of a specific teaching concept;
- if applicable: expertise related to the distinctive feature applied for.

The panel is composed of a minimum of four members. An active higher education student (engaged in quality assurance) sits on the panel. The panel is supported by a secretary trained by NVAO who formally does not sit on the panel.

The panel members are independent of the programme (for at least five years, they have had no direct nor indirect ties with the institution providing the programme that would lead to a conflict of interest). Prior to the assessment, the panel members sign a declaration of independence.

Assessment clusters

Existing programmes are assessed in assessment clusters.⁶ A single panel conducts a comparative assessment of the entire cluster.⁷ The boards of the institutions concerned submit a coordinated proposal regarding the panel composition to NVAO for approval⁸ (listing the secretary and process coordinator, if any⁹). This proposal specifies how (interconnection in) the panel will contribute to a consistent comparison between the programmes. NVAO assesses the competence, independence, and interconnection of the panel on the basis of the above criteria.

Panel preparations

The panel chair and the panel secretary have been trained in accordance with the NVAO requirements. In addition, the panel members are trained/briefed. The panel agrees on the approach to be adopted. Prior to the site visit, the panel has perused the programme's self-evaluation report. In a subsequent preparatory internal panel meeting, the panel discusses the self-evaluation report and the underlying documents. Furthermore, the panel formulates the questions it will pose to the discussion partners during the site visit.

The panel conducts a peer review, i.e., consultation/assessment by peers occupies centre stage. The panel's attitude and working methods correspond to this point of departure. This means, for example, that the panel operates on the basis of trust and respects the principles of the programme, conducts an open dialogue with the programme, does justice to the various perspectives of quality, and contributes to improvement.

Formation of judgements

Within the panel, judgements are formed on a peer-by-peer basis. Equal justice is done to the various perspectives of quality represented on the panel, including the student perspective. In this respect, the panel strives for consensus.

2.7.5 Site visit

The site visit is composed of two elements:

1. Assessment in the context of accreditation and improvement: the programme proposes a schedule for the site visit, including sequence of interviews, types of interviews, participants, and duration. The panel honours such proposal wherever possible and may request adjustments to further the formation of reliable judgements;
2. in addition, the programme conducts a so-called development dialogue with the panel, discussing potential improvements from a development perspective.

2.7.6 Report

The site visit generates two reports:

1. advisory report: this report provides insight into the findings underpinning the judgements assigned by the panel and summarises them in a concise advisory report. The standards and

⁶ "Unique" programmes constitute a separate assessment cluster.

⁷ For reasons of independence, specific expertise, and availability of panel members, the composition may differ from one programme to the next. However, the various compositions must "overlap" sufficiently in order to ensure consistency in the comparative assessment.

⁸ This task may be delegated to a secretary.

⁹ The secretary and process coordinator do not formally sit on the panel. They support the judgement formation process, but do not have a say in it.

assessment rules from the relevant framework are leading in this report. The advisory report comprises recommendations for improvement. The advisory report contains a summary. The advisory report underpins the accreditation decision by NVAO. NVAO publishes its decision and the advisory report;

2. in addition, within a reasonable time after the accreditation decision by NVAO, the institution publishes the conclusions from the development dialogue with the panel.

The panel chair endorses the draft advisory report following approval by the panel members.

The institution receives this draft report in order to correct any factual inaccuracies within a period of two weeks. The panel will process the response provided by the institution, whereupon the chair will endorse the final report, following approval by the panel members.

2.8 Assessment process for new programmes (initial accreditations)

2.8.1 Application

The institution submits an application to NVAO. The application comprises an information dossier, set up according to the standards of the assessment framework. The information dossier is a self-contained document comprising a maximum of 15 pages (limited framework) / 20 pages (extensive framework), excluding appendices. In addition to an information dossier, existing documents of the programmes may also be used.

The programme appends a limited number of appendices to the information dossier. These appendices provide insight into the set-up and/or contents of the curriculum and the composition of the staff team.

The panel requests additional documents and information if so required in order to form an opinion. The point of departure is that the programme submits the documents and information that the panel requires to carry out its tasks. However, the panel will exercise restraint in this respect.

2.8.2 Panel composition

The composition, preparations, and judgement formation of panels involved in an initial accreditation procedure are identical to those of panels involved in the assessment of existing programmes (see Paragraph 2.7.4, with the exception of “assessment clusters”). NVAO convenes and appoints the panel that will conduct the assessment for initial accreditation. Within two weeks after the composition is announced, the institution may lodge substantiated objections against the composition of the panel with NVAO. The panel members are independent of the programme (for at least five years, they have had no direct nor indirect ties with the institution providing the programme that would lead to a conflict of interest). Prior to the assessment, the panel members sign a declaration of independence. In initial accreditation procedures, the panels are supported by a secretary and/or a process coordinator supplied and trained by NVAO¹⁰.

2.8.3 Site visit

The schedule for the site visit is set down by the process coordinator and the contact person of the programme in mutual consultation. See Paragraph 2.7.5 (with the exception of *Development dialogue*).

2.8.4 Advisory report

Initial accreditation procedures only involve an advisory report. See Paragraph 2.7.6 (with the exception of the report on the development dialogue). Supplementary to Paragraph 2.7.6: When the panel

¹⁰ The secretary and process coordinator do not formally sit on the panel. They support the judgement formation process, but do not have a say in it.

recommends the imposition of conditions, the institution responds to such conditions upon its correction of factual inaccuracies. NVAO takes account of the response in deciding on the conditions and the time frame within which the institution must demonstrate its satisfaction thereof.

2.9 Decision-making by NVAO

NVAO forms an opinion about the advisory report, thereby considering consistency, panel approach, procedural requirements, substantiation and weighting in order to ascertain that the panel recommendations have been substantiated in a thorough, proper, and verifiable manner, and that the panel has reached its judgement in a consistent manner. NVAO may invite the panel chair (and possibly other panel members) to provide an explanation. NVAO informs the institution about these consultations and may invite the institution for an interview. Institutions may indicate their need for an explanation.

Based on the panel advisory report and the explanation, if any, NVAO forms a substantiated and independent opinion. The decision may be: positive; conditionally positive, or negative. The institution is given the opportunity to respond to factual inaccuracies in the intended decision.

2.9.1 Existing programmes

Programmes are accredited for six years. Every six years, the programme must demonstrate that it still meets the re-accreditation standards. Based on the panel advisory report, NVAO forms a substantiated and independent opinion on the basis of which it takes a decision. NVAO may decide that the programme will be accredited for another six years, that the programme will not be re-accredited, or that the current accreditation term will temporarily be extended within the context of an improvement period.

An Unsatisfactory score with respect to standard 1 dictates a negative decision by NVAO, without a possibility for a supplementary assessment. When the panel recommends that an improvement period be granted, the programme must add an improvement plan to its application for re-accreditation, together with the recommendations of the programme committee regarding such plan (if a programme committee is required by law).

NVAO takes account of the improvement plan in its decision to extend the current accreditation term within the context of an improvement period and in its decision on the time frame within which the programme must demonstrate its achievement of the improvement. In the latter case, a supplementary assessment will be conducted within a maximum of two years. This is set down in the decision.

2.9.2 Assessment after improvement

In its decision to extend the current accreditation term within the context of an improvement period, NVAO sets down which aspects will be assessed to ascertain achievement of the improvement. In addition, it sets down a deadline for the submission of documents by the programme, demonstrating that the improvement has been achieved. In principle, the same panel will assess whether the improvement has been achieved. NVAO may decide to change the composition. The panel decides on the approach to be adopted in the assessment. The panel advises the Board of NVAO. For more details, see Paragraph 2.9 *Decision-making by NVAO*.

2.9.3 Initial accreditations

In initial accreditation procedures, NVAO may take a positive decision (accreditation for a period of six years) or a negative decision. NVAO may attach conditions to a positive decision. In the latter case, a supplementary assessment will be conducted within a maximum of two years. If conditions have been

imposed, the duration of the initial accreditation will be limited to the time frame within which the conditions have to be satisfied.

Programmes that have undergone an extensive initial accreditation are required to have their exit level assessed after three years. This requirement only applies if the institution providing the programme does not hold a (conditional) institutional audit (see *Explanation: initial accreditation, extensive assessment of achieved learning outcomes after three years*).

New programmes are assigned to an assessment cluster no later than in the April round¹¹ of the year two years before the year of the expiry date (year of April round = year of expiry date minus 2). No later than in the relevant April round, the institution must submit an application for assignment. This requirement is contained in the decision.

2.9.4 Conditional assessment

In a positive conditional decision, NVAO sets out the aspects that will be assessed in order to ascertain satisfaction of the conditions. In addition, it specifies a deadline for the submission of documents by the programme demonstrating that the conditions have been satisfied. In principle, the same panel will assess whether the conditions have been met. NVAO may decide to change the composition of the panel. The panel decides on the approach to be adopted for the assessment. The process coordinator coordinates the organisation of the assessment with the institution. The panel advises the Board of NVAO. For more details, see Paragraph 2.9, *Decision-making by NVAO*.

¹¹ NVAO processes changes in the composition of assessment clusters once a year (April round) and publishes them on its website.

3 Other assessments

Other procedures may apply in combination with institutional audits or programme assessments.

This is the case, for example, with applications for assessment of:

- specific aspects (in institutional audits);
- initial accreditation of the first programme provided by an organisation pursuing recognition by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science as a “recognised private institution”, and intending to provide an accredited programme;
- extensions of course durations;
- (joint programmes / joint degrees);
- distinctive features;
- research master’s programmes;
- panel compositions.

The panel will take account of these procedures, insofar as applicable, in its recommendations.

The supplementary / deviant requirements pertaining to the structure of the panel assessment and supplements to the assessment standards have been set down in separate documents. NVAO publishes such documents on its website.

4 Appeals

Before ratifying a decision regarding an institutional audit, limited programme assessment, extensive programme assessment, limited initial accreditation, (aggravated) extensive initial accreditation or additional initial accreditation assessment, NVAO allows the board of the institution a term of two weeks to present its views concerning factual inaccuracies in the intended decision.

These two weeks fall within the statutory time frame of six months (for institutional audits, limited initial accreditations and extensive initial accreditations) or, as the case may be, three months (for limited programme assessments and extensive programme assessments) within which NVAO is required to make its decision.

Once ratified, NVAO forwards the decision to the board of the institution as soon as possible. At the same time, NVAO publishes its decision by placing it on its website.

NVAO decisions are open to appeal.

Stakeholders may lodge an internal appeal with NVAO. The time frame for lodging internal appeals is six weeks. In principle, the processing of the appeal involves a hearing. NVAO makes its decision within twelve weeks after receiving the appeal. A decision after appeal may be postponed for no more than six weeks. Such postponement is communicated in writing. The appeals procedure is subject to the General Administrative Law Act (AWB) and the Appeals Procedure Regulations AwB NVAO.

NVAO decisions after appeal are open to external appeals with the Administrative Jurisdiction Department of the Council of State. The time frame for lodging external appeals is six weeks. Pending the internal or external appeal procedure, the competent administrative court may be requested to make provisional arrangements if urgency, due to the interests involved, so requires.

5 Publication

Following publication in the Dutch Government Gazette [Staatscourant], the *Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands* is placed on the NVAO website (www.nvao.net).

Appendix: List of abbreviations

CROHO	Central Register of Higher Education Programmes
AD	Associate Degree programme
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (European Standards and Guidelines)
NVAO	Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders
PDCA	Plan Do Check Act
WHW	Dutch Higher Education and Research Act

Colophon

Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands

September 2016

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2. Overview of standards and assessment rules in the 2016 and 2014 accreditation systems of the Netherlands

(not part of the framework)

Overview of standards and assessment rules in the 2016 and 2014 accreditation systems of the Netherlands

INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT

Standards Institutional audit 2016			Institutional audit 2014	
Standard	1	Philosophy and policy The institution has a broadly supported educational philosophy and pursues a corresponding policy focused on the internal quality assurance of its education.	1	Vision of the quality of the education provided The institution has a broadly supported vision of the quality of its education and the development of a quality culture.
	2	Implementation The institution realises its educational philosophy in an effective manner, which is demonstrated by appropriate policy actions and processes, particularly relating to staff, student assessment, services and facilities, and students with a functional impairment.	2	Policy The institution pursues an adequate policy in order to realise its vision of the quality of its education. This comprises at least: policies in the field of education, staff, facilities, accessibility and feasibility for students with a functional disability, embedding of research in the education provided, as well as the interrelation between education and the (international) professional field and discipline.
	3	Evaluation and monitoring The institution systematically evaluates whether the intended policy objectives relating to educational quality are achieved. Relevant stakeholders are involved in this process.	3	Output The institution has insight into the extent to which its vision of the quality of its education is realised. It gauges and evaluates the quality of its programmes on a regular basis, among students, staff, alumni and representatives of the professional field.
	4	Development The institution has a focus on development and works systematically	4	Improvement policy The institution can demonstrate that it improves the quality of its programmes wherever required,

		on the improvement of its education.		systematically and in a timely manner.
			5	<p>Organisation and decision-making structure</p> <p>The institution has an effective organisation and decision-making structure with regard to the quality of its programmes, which clearly defines the tasks, authorities and responsibilities and which encompasses the participation of students and staff.</p>

Assessment rules Institutional audit 2016			Institutional audit 2014	
Judgement per standard	Meets the standard	The institution meets the standard.	Meets the standard	
	Partially meets the standard	The institution meets the standard to a significant extent, but improvements are needed in order to fully meet the standard. Conditions for improvement are set down (see under <i>Conditions</i>).	Partially meets the standard	
	Does not meet the standard	The institution does not meet the standard.	Does not meet the standard	
Final conclusion	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The institution meets all the standards; - Limited programme assessment (marginal programme assessment - new policy). 	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Valid for a term of 6 years; - Limited programme assessment.
	Conditionally positive	- A judgement of "partially meets the standard" for a maximum of two standards;	Conditionally positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maximum of two years; - Limited programme assessment.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - + condition(s); - Limited programme assessment (marginal programme assessment - new policy). 		
	Negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The institution fails to meet one or more standards; - Additionally “partially meets” three or more other standards; - Extensive programme assessment. 	Negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does not meet standard 1 or standard 4; - Extensive programme assessment; - Cannot apply for institutional audit for three years.
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attendant on final conclusion of “conditionally positive”; - When realisation is realistic and feasible within a maximum term of 2 years, otherwise final conclusion of “negative”; - Panel sets down concrete recommendations regarding conditions to be satisfied in order to meet the standards; - NVAO decides on conditions to be imposed and sets down timeframe for satisfaction of the conditions. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Judgement of “conditionally positive” only if realisation feasible within maximum term of 2 years; - Audit panel sets down explicit conditions; - Audit panel indicates maximum term for satisfaction of conditions; - Conditions satisfied: validity extended to 6 years. 	
Recommendations	With respect to each standard, the panel may make suggestions for improvements, which are clearly separated from the substantiation of the judgements in its report.		The panel will include recommendations regarding any potential measures for improvement in a separate paragraph and in the summary of its advisory report.	

PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT

Programme assessment standards		2016 Limited	Extensive	2014 limited	extensive
	Standard 1	Intended learning outcomes The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.	Intended learning outcomes The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.	Intended learning outcomes The intended learning outcomes of the programme have been concretised with regard to content, level and orientation; they meet international requirements.	Intended learning outcomes The intended learning outcomes of the programme have been concretised with regard to content, level and orientation; they meet international requirements.
	Standard 2	Teaching-learning environment The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.	Orientation The curriculum enables the students to master appropriate (professional or academic) research and professional skills.	Teaching-learning environment The curriculum, staff and programme-specific services and facilities enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.	Curriculum The orientation of the curriculum assures the development of skills in the field of scientific research and/or the professional practice.
	Standard 3	Student assessment The programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place.	Content The contents of the curriculum enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.	Student assessment The programme has an adequate student assessment system in place.	Curriculum The contents of the curriculum enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.
	Standard 4	Achieved learning outcomes The programme	Learning environment The structure of the curriculum encourages	Achieved learning outcomes The programme	Curriculum The structure of the curriculum encourages

		demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.	study and enables students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.	demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.	study and enables students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.
	Standard 5		Intake The curriculum ties in with the qualifications of the incoming students.		Curriculum The curriculum ties in with the qualifications of the incoming students.
	Standard 6		Staff The staff team is qualified for the realisation of the curriculum in terms of content and educational expertise. The team size is sufficient.		Staff The staff are qualified and the size of the staff is sufficient for the realisation of the curriculum in terms of content, educational expertise and organisation.
	Standard 7		Facilities The accommodation and material facilities (infrastructure) are sufficient for the realisation of the curriculum.		Facilities The accommodation and the facilities (infrastructure) are sufficient for the realisation of the curriculum.
	Standard 8		Tutoring The tutoring of and provision of information to students are conducive to study progress and tie in with the needs of students		Services Tutoring and student information provision bolster students' progress and tie in with the needs of students.
	Standard 9		Quality assurance The programme has an explicit and widely		Quality assurance The programme is evaluated on a regular

			supported quality assurance system in place. It promotes the quality culture and has a focus on development.		basis, in part on the basis of assessable targets.
	Standard 10		Student assessment The programme has an adequate student assessment system in place.		Student assessment The programme has an adequate student assessment system in place.
	Standard 11		Achieved learning outcomes The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.		Achieved learning outcomes The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Assessment rules Final conclusion Existing programmes		2016 Limited	Extensive	2014 Limited	Extensive
	Excellent The programme systematically well surpasses the generic quality standard and is regarded as an international example.	- At least 2 standards (including standard 4) are scored "excellent" + remainder are "satisfactory" (marginal programme assessment - new policy)	- At least 5 standards (including standard 11) are scored "excellent" + remainder are "satisfactory" (marginal programme assessment - new policy)	- At least 2 standards including standard 4 are scored "excellent".	- At least 5 standards including standard 11 are scored "excellent".
	Good The programme systematically surpasses the generic quality	- At least 2 standards (including standard 4) are scored "good" + remainder are "satisfactory"	- At least 5 standards (including standard 11) are scored "good" + remainder are "satisfactory"	- At least 2 standards including standard 4 are scored "good".	- At least 5 standards including standard 11 are scored "good".

	standard.	(marginal programme assessment - new policy)	(marginal programme assessment - new policy)		
	Satisfactory The programme meets the generic quality standard across its entire spectrum.	- At least 2 standards (including standard 1) are scored "satisfactory" - + max. improvement period of 2 years following "unsatisfactory" (marginal programme assessment - new policy)	- At least 6 standards (including standard 1) are scored "satisfactory" - + max. improvement period of 2 years following "unsatisfactory" (marginal programme assessment - new policy)		
	Unsatisfactory The programme does not meet the generic quality standard and shows shortcomings with respect to multiple aspects of the standard. The panel may suggest an improvement period (see <i>Improvement period</i>).	a) standard 1 "unsatisfactory"; or b) 1 or 2 standards "unsatisfactory" + no improvement within maximum of 2 years following "unsatisfactory"; or c) 3 or more standards "unsatisfactory"	a) standard 1 "unsatisfactory"; or b) at least 6 standards "satisfactory" + no improvement within maximum of 2 years following "unsatisfactory"; or c) less than 6 standards "satisfactory"	- Standards 1, 3 or 4 are scored "unsatisfactory"; - Standard 1 scored "unsatisfactory" = no improvement period.	- Standards 1, 10 or 11 are scored "unsatisfactory"; - Standard 1 scored "unsatisfactory" = no improvement period.
Improvement period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Following final conclusion of "satisfactory", - Standards are scored "unsatisfactory"; - When improvement is realistic and feasible within a maximum of two years, otherwise final conclusion of "unsatisfactory"; - Panel sets down concrete recommendations regarding the conditions to be satisfied in order to meet the standards; - NVAO decides on imposition of an improvement period. 			Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (WHW), Article 5a.12a, first paragraph (WHW Accreditation Decree)	
Recommendations	With respect to each standard, the panel may make recommendations for improvement, which are separate from the substantiation of the judgements in its report.			The panel will include recommendations regarding any potential measures for improvement in a separate paragraph and in the summary of its advisory report.	

INITIAL ACCREDITATION

Standards Initial accreditation		2016 Limited	Extensive	2014 Limited	Extensive
	Standard 1	Intended learning outcomes The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.	Intended learning outcomes The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.	Intended learning outcomes The intended learning outcomes of the programme have been concretised with regard to content, level and orientation; they meet international requirements.	Intended learning outcomes The intended learning outcomes of the programme have been concretised with regard to content, level and orientation; they meet international requirements.
	Standard 2	Teaching-learning environment The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.	Orientation The curriculum enables the students to master appropriate (professional or academic) research and professional skills.	Teaching-learning environment The curriculum, staff and programme-specific services and facilities enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.	Curriculum The orientation of the curriculum assures the development of skills in the field of scientific research and/or the professional practice.
	Standard 3	Student assessment The programme has an adequate student assessment system in place.	Content The contents of the curriculum enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.	Student assessment The programme has an adequate student assessment system in place.	Curriculum The contents of the curriculum enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.
	Standard 4	If applicable: Achieved learning outcomes The programme	Learning environment The structure of the curriculum encourages	Graduation guarantee and financial provisions The institution guarantees	Curriculum The structure of the curriculum encourages

		demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved (only if the programme is already taught, by reference to interim tests and, if available, final projects).	study and enables students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.	students that they can complete the entire curriculum and makes sufficient financial provisions available.	study and enables students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.
	Standard 5		Intake The curriculum ties in with the qualifications of the incoming students.	If applicable: Achieved learning outcomes The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.	Curriculum The curriculum ties in with the qualifications of the incoming students.
	Standard 6		Staff The staff team is qualified for the realisation of the curriculum in terms of content and educational expertise. The team size is sufficient.		Staff The staff are qualified and the size of the staff is sufficient for the realisation of the curriculum in terms of content, educational expertise and organisation.
	Standard 7		Facilities The accommodation and material facilities (infrastructure) are sufficient for the realisation of the curriculum.		Facilities The accommodation and the facilities are sufficient for the realisation of the curriculum.
	Standard 8		Tutoring The tutoring of and provision of information to		Services Tutoring and student information provision

			students are conducive to study progress and tie in with the needs of students.		bolster students' progress and tie in with the needs of students.
	Standard 9		Quality assurance The programme has an explicit and widely supported quality assurance system in place. It promotes the quality culture and has a focus on development.		Quality assurance The programme is evaluated on a regular basis, in part on the basis of assessable targets.
	Standard 10		Student assessment The programme has an adequate student assessment system in place.		Student assessment The programme has an adequate student assessment system in place.
	Standard 11		If applicable: Achieved learning outcomes The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved (if the programme is actually taught and achievement of the learning outcomes by graduates is verifiable); (no actual teaching + no (conditionally positive) institutional audit: achieved learning outcomes + validity of		Graduation guarantee and financial provisions The institution guarantees students that they can complete the entire curriculum and makes sufficient financial provisions available.

			assessment, testing, and examination of students to be assessed after 3 years)		
	Standard 12				If applicable: Achieved learning outcomes The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Assessment rules Final conclusion Initial accreditation		2016 Limited	Extensive	2014 Limited	Extensive
	Positive The new programme meets the generic quality standard.	- The programme meets all the standards.	- The programme meets all the standards	- The programme meets all the standards.	- The programme meets all the standards.
	Conditionally positive The new programme meets the generic quality standard to a significant extent, but improvements are required in order to fully meet the standard(s). Conditions are set down to this end (see under "Conditions").	- Judgement of "partially meets the standard" with respect to a maximum of 2 standards; - + condition(s).	- The programme meets at least six standards; - + partially meets the remaining standards.	- No initial accreditation if standards 1 or 3 are scored "unsatisfactory".	- No initial accreditation if standards 1 or 10 are scored "unsatisfactory".
	Negative The new programme does not meet the generic	- The programme fails to meet 1 or more standards; - + partially meets 3 or	- The programme fails to meet 1 or more standards; - + meets less than 6	- Standards 1, 3 or 5 (if applicable) are scored "unsatisfactory".	- Standards 1, 10 or 12 (if applicable) are scored

	quality standard.	more standards.	standards.		“unsatisfactory”.
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Following recommendation of “conditionally positive”, - When improvement is realistic and feasible within a maximum of two years, otherwise final conclusion of “negative”; - Panel sets down concrete recommendations regarding the conditions to be satisfied in order to meet the standards; - NVAO decides on the imposition of conditions. 			Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (WHW), Article 5a.11, fourth paragraph / Article 5a.13d, sixth paragraph (WHW Accreditation Decree)	
Recommendations	With respect to each standard, the panel may make recommendations for improvement, which are separate from the substantiation of the judgements in its report.			The panel will include recommendations regarding any potential measures for improvement in a separate paragraph and in the summary of its advisory report.	

ENQA Review 2017
Self-Assessment Report NVAO

Annex 5

Frameworks
higher education
Flanders and
Quality Code 2015

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	2. Quality Code (official translation)
	3. Framework for initial accreditation (draft translation without legal status)
	4. Framework for programme accreditation (draft translation without legal status)

Framework for Institutional reviews - Flanders 2015-2017

Framework

20 March 2015

draft translation without legal status

Framework for Institutional reviews - Flanders 2015-2017

Framework

20 March 2015

draft translation without legal status

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1 Set-up

The institutional review (review) is a periodic assessment of the quality of the educational policy pursued by an institution. The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) commissions an external panel (panel) to conduct the review.

The assessment is divided into four inter-related questions:

1. How does the institution view the quality of its education?
2. How does the institution intend to realise its vision of the quality?
3. How does the institution gauge to what extent it is realising its vision of the quality?
4. How is the institution working on improvement?

In the assessment framework (framework), these questions have been translated into four standards: vision and policy, policy implementation, evaluation and monitoring, and improvement policy. The framework thus ties in with the themes in the Flemish Higher Education Codex and the so-called PDCA cycle. The quality culture within the institution serves as a leitmotiv and is considered in each standard of the framework.

The review enables the institution to demonstrate the vision from which it operates, the policy it pursues, the achievements resulting from that policy, the measures for improvement it has taken, and any new policy it has developed. The review comprises all policy domains that support the quality of the education provided, i.e., including policy in the field of research as well as social and academic services provided. The review expressly does not concern the actual quality of the research and/or the social and academic services.

Each institution chooses a structure and quality culture that suit its vision. As a component of an organisational culture, the quality culture is focused on continuous quality improvement.

It is reflected in an institution-wide quality assurance system and thus constitutes the foundation of the quality of an institution's educational policy as well as the actual education provided.

The review framework is broad-based and applicable to any institution, regardless of its organisational structure. The review also pertains to any tasks that the institution has outsourced to other bodies.

Regarding each of the standards, the panel gives a weighted and substantiated judgement based on the criteria and the verifiable facts underpinning them. The panel subsequently gives a weighted and substantiated final conclusion.

The institutional review is mandatory for statutory registered institutions. Two or more statutory registered institutions that are engaged in a merger process may opt for submitting a single critical reflection. NVAO bases its assessment on the level of the organisational form as proposed in the critical reflection.

The institutional review is mandatory for statutory registered institutions. The review is not mandatory for non-statutory registered institutions. Two or more statutory registered institutions that are engaged in a merger process may decide to submit a single critical reflection. NVAO bases its assessment on the unit as it is proposed in the critical reflection.

2 Assessment framework

2.1 Vision and Policy

Standard 1

The institution's vision of higher education and its quality, the policy it pursues with regard to education and the policy it pursues with regard to research and social and academic services in relation to the quality of education, offer an adequate response to the social challenges.

Criteria

The institution has a broadly supported vision of education and a corresponding policy. The policy comprises, as a minimum: policy regarding education, as well as research and social and academic services in relation to education.

The institution has a vision of higher education and the quality of its programmes in relation to the social challenges of its environment. The connections may be fleshed out at the regional, national, European or international level. To realise its vision, the institution has formulated an adequate policy. One of the key focal points of this policy is providing students with the qualifications necessary to meet the challenges of civil society.

It is essential for all those involved to play an active role in the establishment of the vision and policy; this characterises a quality culture.

2.2 Policy implementation

Standard 2

The institution has adequate policy measures, processes, procedures, practices and instruments at its disposal to realise its policy in an effective manner, and to optimise the quality of the programmes offered.

Criteria

The institution pursues its education policy in an adequate manner, using policy measures, processes, procedures, practices and instruments, among other ways.

Adequate policy implementation presupposes concrete objectives ensuing from the vision and allocation of sufficient resources to implement the policy. The institution explains what policy measures, processes, procedures, practices and instruments it uses and why it deems those most efficient and effective. The quality culture in place is demonstrated by the participation, the process, the results and the manner in which the instruments are deployed.

2.3 Evaluation and monitoring

Standard 3

The institution guarantees the effectiveness of its policy implementation for the benefit of the quality of education by setting up feedback and monitoring systems and, in particular, internal quality monitoring systems.

Criteria

The institution gauges and evaluates the effectiveness of its policy implementation on a regular basis in order to guarantee the quality of the education it provides. To this end, it has an adequate quality assurance system in place.

In order to be able to guarantee the effectiveness of its policy, the institution must have insight into the extent to which its vision of education is realised under the policy it pursues. To this end, it has a proper evaluation and monitoring system in place. This system provides the institution with aggregated

information. This information pertains to all relevant policy domains, including any procedures and instruments the institution deploys to realise its policy objectives and guarantee the quality of education.

The system of regular internal evaluations and external assessments ties in with the management model pursued. Institution-wide uniformity in the evaluation and gauging activities is not required. An active role by students, staff, alumni, external and independent experts from the disciplines and the professional field is essential in a quality assurance system, and bolsters the further development of a quality culture

2.4 Enhancement policy

Standard 3

The institution takes measures to improve the realisation of its policy objectives.

Criteria

The institution can demonstrate that it is systematically improving its education policy wherever necessary.

The institution pursues an active improvement policy based on the outcomes of its measuring and assessment activities. Among other things, it demonstrates its ability to innovate and adapt in order to improve the education it provides. The improvement policy pursued by the institution results in a quality culture, in which all those involved contribute to innovation, and to quality improvement.

3 Assessment scale and assessment rules

3.1 Scale for assessment of the standards

Regarding each of the above standards, the panel gives a judgement: “meets the standard”, “partially meets the standard” or “does not meet the standard”. The judgement is based on the underlying criteria, is substantiated in the evaluation report in a verifiable manner, and corresponds to the conditions specified below.

Meets the standard

The judgement of “meets the standard” means that the underlying criteria are met to an extent that enables the institution to guarantee the quality of the education it provides by means of its education policy. In this context, the panel may formulate recommendations without undermining the judgement of “meets the standard”.

Partially meets the standard

The judgement of “partially meets the standard” means that the underlying criteria are met to such an extent that the institution can only guarantee the quality of the education it provides by means of its education policy if certain conditions are met. These conditions are specified in the review report.

Does not meet the standard

The judgement “does not meet the standard” means that the underlying criteria are insufficiently met. This means that the education policy pursued does not enable an institution to guarantee the quality of the education it provides.

3.2 Assessment rules for the final conclusion

Regarding each of the above standards, the panel gives a judgement: “meets the standard”, “partially meets the standard” or “does not meet the standard”. The judgement is based on the underlying criteria, is substantiated in the evaluation report in a verifiable manner, and corresponds to the conditions specified below.

General final conclusion

The institution pursues an adequate education policy that it implements in an effective and improvement-oriented manner in order to be able, based also on the prevalent quality culture, to guarantee that the quality of the education it provides is at an international and socially relevant level.

The panel gives a judgement on a three-point scale: positive, conditionally positive or negative.

A judgement of “positive”, “conditionally positive” or “negative” corresponds to the conditions specified below.

Positive

The institution will receive a positive judgement if it meets all the standards.

Conditionally positive

In all other cases, the institution will receive a conditionally positive judgement. The panel explicitly indicates the main conditions and specifies the term within they must be met.

Negative

The institution will receive a negative judgement if it fails to meet three or four standards.

4 Composition of the review panel

NVAO convenes and appoints the panel that will conduct the review. The institution to be assessed is entitled to lodge substantiated objections to the composition of the panel within a term of fifteen calendar days from the day following receipt of the notification from NVAO.

The panel must meet the following requirements:

1. The panel is composed of five members, of whom one is a student.
2. The panel commands administrative, educational and audit expertise and is acquainted with developments in the higher education sector at home and abroad.
3. The members of the panel are independent and have had no ties with the institution to be assessed over at least the past five years, with the exception of the student, for whom one year suffices.
4. The majority of the members are employed or have recently been employed abroad and are thus familiar with the international quality requirements from a social point of view.
5. At least one of the members commands sufficient knowledge of the Flemish higher education sector.
6. One of the members with administrative expertise will act as Chair and to that end follow a training provided by NVAO.
7. All the members of the review panel will be offered training by NVAO.

The panel is counselled by a trained NVAO process coordinator and supported by a secretary certified by NVAO. Both command sufficient knowledge of the Flemish higher education sector. The secretary and the process coordinator have no ties with the institution to be assessed. They are not members of the panel.

The stakeholders will report to NVAO any irregularities occurring during the site visit or the assessment process.

5 Assessment process

NVAO bears final responsibility for the manner in which the assessment process is conducted. The Internal Handbook for Institutional Reviews contains a detailed explanation of the assessment process. The various steps are outlined below.

5.1 Administrative consultation

NVAO aims for a customised approach, geared to the diversity in organisational forms and the specific nature of each institution. For that reason, the assessment process begins with an administrative consultation between the institution and NVAO. In any case, the following issues are discussed during this consultation: the institution's organisational structure and profile, recent developments in a process of change, if any, in the composition of the panel, the language in which the review will be conducted, the timeframe, and the follow-up with possibly a presentation of the outcomes by the panel for a wider audience.

5.2 Accreditation portret

NVAO draws up an accreditation portrait of the institution for the benefit of the panel. The accreditation portrait provides an overview of all the accreditation decisions for new and existing programmes. Prior to being dispatched to the panel, the accreditation portrait is forwarded to the institution for supplementation and/or correction. Approx. 6 weeks before the first visit, the accreditation portrait is made available to the institution concerned, which is given the opportunity to respond.

5.3 Critical reflection

The institution draws up a critical reflection. In essence, the critical reflection answers the question of how the institution guarantees the quality of the education it provides within the relevant social and international context. Since the review focuses on the institution's education policy at the time of the application, the critical reflection provides a clear picture of its past and present policy as well as the results achieved.

The critical reflection follows the standards of the assessment framework pertaining to the review. The institution is expected to provide an explanation regarding each standard, including the underlying criteria, based on its own vision and policy. The quality culture is expressly factored in. In the explanations, reference should be made to verifiable facts and underpinning documents. The explanations should be based on notable examples. Each standard will conclude with a strengths-weaknesses analysis and state which measures for improvement have been planned. The critical reflection is a self-contained document that can be read separately.

An introductory chapter contains a number of basic data on the institution and its programmes. These enable the panel to gain a global picture of the institution.

When considering standard 1, the institution is expected to outline the choices it has made in terms of the content of its vision and policy. It will describe how its vision and policy have been formulated and how the stakeholders have been involved.

With regard to standard 2, the institution presents an analysis of the procedures followed and the instruments used for the implementation of its policy. It will reflect on the underlying principles and considerations. It will illustrate the implementation of its policy by reference to concrete results achieved.

The institution discusses its evaluation and monitoring system under standard 3. It provides insight into the manner in which it systematically monitors and evaluates, and into the instruments it uses to that end.

Under standard 4, the institution reflects on the measures for improvement. It provides insight into the measures that have been taken, the results achieved, and the efforts it is making for the purpose of innovation. Special attention is focused on the manner in which the institution deals with negatively assessed programmes, if any.

The critical reflection comprises a maximum of 50 pages. It has very few appendices and any appendices are limited in size. The required appendices are listed in Chapter 7.

The institution is to submit its critical reflection, including appendices, to NVAO no later than six weeks before the first site visit.

5.4 Site visit

The site visit for the purpose of the review comprises two components and takes a total of two to five days. The panel may extend its visit if so required. As a rule, the panel starts off by visiting the institution, followed by a second visit after two to four weeks. The panel may decide to diverge from this set-up by mutual consent.

First visit: exploration

Prior to the first visit, the panel has studied the institution's critical reflection and the accreditation portrait. The first visit to the institution is preceded by a preliminary meeting of the panel. During the preliminary meeting, the panel discusses the critical reflection and the underpinning documents. In addition, it formulates the questions it intends to put to the discussion partners.

The first visit has an exploratory nature. The panel gains insight into the ins and outs of the institution, and the specific points for attention of the board of the institution, and satisfaction among students, teaching staff and other stakeholders.

During the first visit, the panel will, in any case, meet with the following discussion partners: the board of the institution, the managers responsible for education, quality assurance experts and other relevant staff, teachers from representative bodies, students from representative bodies, representatives from the professional field (if relevant). In addition, the panel will set aside time for open consultations. The institution and the panel will make these open consultations widely known, both prior to and during the visit.

At the end of the first visit, the chair of the panel provides brief feedback information to the institution. This feedback presents the panel's first impressions of the quality assurance in place in the institution. In addition, it indicates the review trails to be conducted.

Second visit: in-depth study

During the second visit to the institution, a further discussion takes place between the panel and representatives of the institution regarding the points for attention emerging from the meetings and the documents studied during the first visit. This discussion enables the panel to ascertain whether its initial impressions were correct.

The audit panel needs to demonstrate how it has ascertained whether an institution's quality assurance system works. To this end, it conducts review trails. In a vertical trail, the panel focuses on two or more

programmes to examine to what degree an element of the vision and policy referred to in standard 1 is actually put into practice. All standards in the framework are considered in succession. Horizontal trails focus on the realisation of a single theme, topic or emphasis in the education policy.

At the end of the second visit, the panel chair informs the institution briefly of the panel's general conclusion and its underlying considerations.

5.5 Assessment procedure within the panel

The panel presents a judgement regarding all the standards contained in the assessment framework. This judgement is based on an appraisal of the positive and critical elements in the panel's findings. Options for the judgement are: meets, does not meet, or partially meets the standard. Subsequently, the panel formulates a final conclusion: positive, conditionally positive, or negative.

The stakeholders will report to NVAO any irregularities occurring during the site visit or the assessment process.

5.6 Review report

The panel secretary draws up an evaluation report comprising 25 to 30 pages.

The comprehensive report is preceded by a summary advisory report in which the panel presents a general consideration of its final conclusions. This document comprises a maximum of two pages and is expressly intended for a wider audience.

The core of the report comprises, for each standard: the panel's findings with factual underpinning, the considerations, the conclusions and any recommendations. The panel bases its substantiation on the critical reflection, the meetings with representatives of the institution and the underpinning facts from the material studied. The evaluation report contains notable and representative examples wherever possible.

Separate chapters contain the recommendations of the panel and a score table with the conclusions of the review.

In addition, the report has a number of appendices: brief CV descriptions of the panel members, the schedules of the site visits, information on the review trails, an overview of the material studied and a list of abbreviations.

After all panel members have approved its contents, the panel chair endorses the report. Subsequently, it is submitted to NVAO.

6 NVAO decision-making

NVAO invites the panel to explain its report. If so required, NVAO may also ask the institution for further information. NVAO subsequently takes an independent decision, of which the review report forms an integral part. In exceptional circumstances, NVAO may depart from the panel's recommendation in a substantiated manner. The institution is given a term of fifteen calendar days to respond to any factual inaccuracies in the report. Subsequently, a final decision is taken.

The first round of institutional reviews (2015-2017) does not entail any legal consequences for the institution. However, the outcomes of the reviews are published on the NVAO website.

7 Appeals

7.1 Internal appeals

Any intended decision by the Board is open to an internal appeal to NVAO. This appeal is lodged in writing by the board of the institution, no later than fifteen calendar days following receipt of the intended decision concerned. NVAO rules on its admissibility. Appeals that are declared admissible and justified, after hearing the parties, are followed by a limited or comprehensive reassessment by the same or another panel.

7.2 External appeals

If an institutional review results in a negative decision, the board of the institution may lodge an appeal against said negative decision with the Flemish government. The appeal is lodged within a term of 30 calendar days, which begins on the day following the service of the negative decision.

8 Required documents

The institution provides the panel with a limited number of documents. NVAO assumes that these are existing documents, available within the institution rather than drawn up specifically for the institutional review. The documents serve as a substantiation and possible verification.

Other material is only required if explicitly requested by the panel, or if the institution wishes to demonstrate a particular profile.

8.1 Basic data concerning the institution

The basic data is incorporated into the appendices to the critical reflection, the review report and the NVAO decision:

1. Name of the institution;
2. Location(s);
3. Overview of all programmes, student rolls and staff numbers.

8.2 Mandatory information in the critical reflection

The list of information studied is incorporated into the review report.

- 1) Vision regarding education and, if available, the most recent strategic policy plan of the institution;
- 2) Organisation chart;
- 3) Overview of quality assurance system (in diagram form; only if not already clear from the critical reflection or other documents).

8.3 Documents for persual during the visits

The list of material studied is incorporated into the review report.

- 1) Education policy plan or similar document(s);
- 2) Staff (policy) plan or similar document(s);
- 3) Current examples of relevant management information;
- 4) Documents in relation to quality assurance.

Colophon

Framework for Institutional Reviews - Flanders 2015-2017

20 March 2015

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Quality Code

- Flanders 2015 - 2017

Setting of the Quality Code

In the period from 2015 to 2017, universities and university colleges will be given the opportunity to demonstrate that they assume full responsibility for assuring and improving the quality of their programmes. In contrast to the institutional review combined with the external assessment of each of the programmes, this entails that the institutions take full charge of the conduct of quality assurance and have this conduct assessed. The Quality Code establishes the general points of departure to be met by this conduct and how the institutions will need to give account.

Alignment with European reference frameworks

This approach fits into a broader framework for quality and quality assurance in European higher education. This is why the Quality Code, firstly, ties in with the revised Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). These may be regarded as the current European requirements regarding quality and quality assurance in higher education. Secondly, and in keeping with the ESG, the quality of a programme cannot be assured without the active involvement of internal and external stakeholders, and of independent, external peers and experts. Thirdly, the Quality Code relates to the Flemish Qualification Structure and the European qualification frameworks. A key point for attention in this context is the conditions that apply for admission to certain professions or vocations. Finally, and also in accordance with the ESG, this Quality Code aims to emphasise that public transparency is an essential element in an institution's conduct of quality assurance of programmes.

Conduct pilots

In the period from 2015 to 2017, the conduct of quality assurance of programmes will be developed on the basis of pilots. These conduct pilots comprise both the view on and the approach to this conduct, and its concrete application in a number of programmes. The institutions determine which programmes will be incorporated into their conduct pilot. The design of the pilots may range from small-scale (cluster of programmes, department/faculty) to institution-wide. In addition, the conduct may be differentiated, for example, by adopting different assessment cycles, by a specific focus on quality features, or by differentiation in the (extent of) involvement of stakeholders and external parties.

The extensive institutional review

This Quality Code constitutes a supplement to the *Framework for Institutional Reviews – Flanders 2015-2017*, and only applies to the extensive institutional review. A regular institutional review assesses the institution's educational policy, quality assurance and quality culture. Within the framework of the institutional review, a review panel will assess processes and procedures that pertain to these elements. To this end, the panel will follow a horizontal and a vertical review trail. However, the regular institutional review will be extended for institutions that choose to assume full responsibility for the quality assurance of their programmes and, in particular, develop conduct pilots. This extension will take the form of a third review trail.

The third review trail

The third review trail focuses exclusively on the assurance of programme quality and, in particular, on the conduct of said quality assurance by the institution. In the

third review trail, the review panel focuses on the conduct exerted by the institution rather than assessing the actual quality of the programmes. To this end, the review panel uses the results and outcomes provided by the institution by way of substantiation. These results and outcomes may take various forms, such as, for example, internal reports, reports by stakeholders, feedback provided by peers or experts, benchmarking exercises, outcomes of surveys, etcetera. It is up to the institution to choose the form that best fits (the quality culture of) the institution.

Features of high-quality higher education programmes

The ESG contains elements pertaining to both quality assurance and the quality of the education provided. The quality assurance elements are examined on the basis of the *Framework for Institutional Reviews – Flanders 2015-2017*. During the third review trail, therefore, the review panel only considers those elements from the ESG that relate to the quality of programmes. In the Quality Code, these elements have been articulated as the features of high-quality higher education programmes in accordance with the ESG, in other words, *quality features*. These quality features do not constitute standards to be met and therefore they are not assessed separately. As the elements from the ESG that pertain to the quality of the education provided, they constitute guidelines for, on the one hand, the institutions in the development of their conduct of quality assurance, and, on the other, the review panel in its assessment. When assessing that conduct, the review panel verifies how these elements have been embedded in the conduct exerted by the institution. The review panel is expressly not meant to assess the programmes itself on the basis of these features.

The quality features constitute the final component of this Quality Code.

Involving stakeholders, peers and experts

Involving internal and external stakeholders on the one hand, and external and independent peers (from the discipline) and experts (with, for example, educational or professional expertise) on the other, enables the institution to demonstrate the quality features of its programmes in an authoritative manner. The institution is free to determine who the relevant stakeholders, peers and experts will be.

Continuous and systematic involvement of the above groups may take various forms. Stakeholders, peers and/or experts may be involved in the substantiation of a single, some, or all of the quality features of a programme. There is no need for every group to provide a substantiation of each of the programme's quality features.

Conduct pilot report

Prior to the third review trail, the institution submits a report regarding its pilot conduct of quality assurance to the review panel. This conduct pilot report may be integrated into the critical reflection ("self-evaluation report") as outlined in the *Framework for Institutional Reviews – Flanders 2015-2017*, or forwarded separately. In the report, the institution indicates how it has designed its conduct of quality assurance, whether the conduct is differentiated, which programmes participate in the pilot and to what extent the conduct is implemented in these programmes.

The review panel is guided by the conduct pilot report and, therefore, the conduct concept developed by the institution.

The assessment

The review panel assesses the pilot on the basis of the conduct pilot report and the results and outcomes provided by the institution. The report enables the panel to focus on the conduct and assess it vis-à-vis the extent to which it has been realised. The results and outcomes involved must be provided to the panel during its site visit, rather than be forwarded beforehand.

The review panel will publish a separate report, focusing on improvement regarding its findings in the third review trail. This report will not contain a final judgement and will not be integrated into the assessment report regarding the institutional review.

The institution will be given a term of fifteen calendar days to respond to any factual inaccuracies in the report. Subsequently, NVAO will take its final decision (regarding the report and the recommendations). The institution may lodge an (internal) complaint with NVAO and an (external) appeal against any intended decision.

Following completion of all institutional reviews, NVAO will publish a general evaluation report, as well as all the underlying panel reports regarding the institutional reviews on the one hand, and the pilots on the other.

Quality features

The following quality features have been derived from the ESG to underpin the conduct of quality assurance of programmes:

- The programme's learning outcomes constitute a transparent and programme-specific interpretation of the international requirements regarding level, content and orientation.
- The programme's curriculum ties in with the most recent developments in the discipline, takes account of the developments in the professional field, and is relevant to society.
- The staff allocated to the programme provide the students with optimum opportunities for achieving the learning outcomes.
- The programme offers the students adequate and easily accessible services, facilities and counselling.
- The teaching and learning environment encourages the students to play an active role in the learning process and fosters smooth study progress.
- The assessment of students reflects the learning process and concretises the intended learning outcomes.
- The programme provides comprehensive and readable information on all stages of study.
- Information regarding the quality of the programme is publicly accessible.

Appendix: Source of the quality features

By way of the quality features, a relationship is established with the revised Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). This particularly concerns the elements of the Standards and the Guidelines that clearly refer to the quality of programmes rather than quality assurance procedures or processes.

- a) The programme's learning outcomes constitute a transparent and programme-specific interpretation of the international requirements regarding level, content and orientation.
→ ESG 1.2. Design and approval of programmes
- b) The programme's curriculum ties in with the most recent developments in the discipline, takes account of the developments in the professional field, and is relevant to society.
→ ESG 1.2. Design and approval of programmes
→ ESG 1.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
→ ESG 1.9. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes
- c) The staff allocated to the programme provide the students with optimum opportunities for achieving the learning outcomes.
→ ESG 1.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
→ ESG 1.5. Teaching staff
- d) The programme offers the students adequate and easily accessible services, facilities and counselling.
→ ESG 1.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
→ ESG 1.6. Learning resources and student support
→ ESG 1.9. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes
- e) The teaching and learning environment encourages the students to play an active role in the learning process and fosters smooth study progress.
→ ESG 1.2. Design and approval of programmes
→ ESG 1.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
- f) The assessment of students reflects the learning process and concretises the intended learning outcomes.
→ ESG 1.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
→ ESG 1.9. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes
- g) The programme provides comprehensive and readable information on all stages of study.
→ ESG 1.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
→ ESG 1.4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification
→ ESG 1.8. Public information
- h) Information regarding the quality of the programme is publicly accessible.
→ ESG 1.8. Public information
→ ESG 1.9. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Initial Accreditation - Flanders 2015-2021

Framework

28 May 2015

draft translation without legal status

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1 Set-up

A new programme may be recognised if sufficient generic quality guarantees are in place. These generic quality guarantees have been set down in law and their assessment is based on three questions:

1. What is the programme aiming for?
2. How does the programme intend to achieve its aims?
3. How will the programme evaluate whether the intended learning outcomes have been achieved?

These questions have been translated into three standards, in accordance with the generic quality guarantees. Regarding each of these standards, an assessment panel gives a substantiated judgement: unsatisfactory or satisfactory. The judgement explicitly refers to the underlying criteria. These criteria are printed in bold in the explanations to the standards. In conclusion, the panel gives a substantiated final judgement on the overall quality of the programme.

Although the same generic quality guarantees apply to all new programmes, the assessment of the proposed programme may vary in nature. This variation depends on the extent to which the programme is new in the institution concerned and in the higher education system of Flanders; it also depends on the extent to which the programme is already offered.

Registered institutions are not subject to institutional reviews. For that reason, an assessment of the programmes they intend to offer features a fourth question on the set-up and organisation of their internal quality assurance.

2 Assessment framework

2.1 Generic quality guarantee: intended exit level

Standard 1

With respect to level, orientation and content, the intended exit level reflects the current requirements that have been set for the programme by the professional field and/or discipline from an international perspective.

Criteria

As for level and orientation (bachelor's or master's; professional or academic), the intended learning outcomes fit into the Flemish qualifications framework and, if available, relevant domain-specific learning outcomes. They tie in with the international perspective of the requirements currently set by the professional field and the discipline with regard to the contents of the programme.

Judgement

The assessment panel gives a well-considered and substantiated judgement according to a two-point scale: "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory".

2.2 Generic quality guarantee: teaching-learning environment

Standard 2

The teaching-learning environment enables the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Criteria

The content and the design of the programme, including the programme-specific teaching and learning formats, the staff to be deployed and the facilities will enable the admitted students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Curriculum, staff and facilities will form a cohesive teaching-learning environment for the students. The planned investments are sufficient to create the programme and to be able to offer the complete educational route.

Judgement

The assessment panel gives a well-considered and substantiated judgement according to a two-point scale: "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory".

2.3 Generic quality guarantee: exit level to be achieved

Standard 3

The programme has an adequate assessment, testing and examination system in place to ascertain whether the intended learning outcomes are being achieved.

Criteria

The programme formulates a policy with respect to assessment, testing and examination that shows how it ensures that the evaluation is valid, reliable and transparent, and how the assessment, testing and examination of the students will show (or has shown) the level achieved.¹ The intended evaluation formats are congruent with the different forms of teaching.

¹ For a programme that has already been organised by the institution, the level realised will be included in the assessment by the assessment panel. This involves, in particular, the testing and examination results, the job opportunities for graduates or transfer rates to subsequent study programmes.

Judgement

The assessment panel gives a well-considered and substantiated judgement according to a two-point scale: “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory”.

2.4 Generic quality guarantee: set-up and organisation of the internal quality assurance

The fourth generic quality guarantee only applies to programmes provided by registered institutions. These institutions are not subject to institutional reviews.

Standard 4

The set-up and the organisation of the internal quality assurance are aimed at systematically improving the programme with the involvement of the relevant stakeholders.

Criteria

The programme will periodically be evaluated, based in part on testable objectives. The outcomes of this evaluation will form the basis for verifiable measures for improvement that contribute to the realisation of the objectives. Staff, students, alumni and the relevant (professional) field of the programme will be actively involved in the internal quality assurance.²

Judgement

The assessment panel gives a well-considered and substantiated judgement according to a two-point scale: “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory”.

² For a programme that has already been organised by the institution, evaluations already conducted will be included in the assessment by the assessment panel.

3 Assessment scale and assessment rule

3.1 Assessment scale

With respect to each of the above standards, the panel gives a judgement of “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory”. The judgement is based on the underlying criteria, is verifiably substantiated in the assessment report and ties in with the conditions listed below. The concept of generic quality plays an essential role in this regard.

Generic quality

means that the generic quality guarantee is in place and the programme – or a mode of study within the programme – meets the quality that, from an international perspective, can reasonably be expected for a Bachelor’s or Master’s programme in higher education.

Satisfactory

With respect to this standard, the programme meets the generic quality standard: it demonstrates an acceptable level across the entire spectrum of the underlying criteria.

Unsatisfactory

The generic quality guarantee is insufficiently present.

3.2 Assessment rule for the final conclusion

A judgement of “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory” with respect to the final conclusion ties in with the conditions listed below.

Satisfactory

The final conclusion concerning a new programme is “satisfactory” if all the generic quality standards are assessed as “satisfactory”.

Unsatisfactory

The final conclusion concerning a new programme is “unsatisfactory” if one or more of the standards are assessed as “unsatisfactory”.

4 Composition of the assessment panel

It is imperative for an assessment panel to be authoritative, independent and possess sufficient expertise in order to allow meaningful discussions among peers, other experts and representatives of the programme. NVAO convenes and appoints the assessment panel that will conduct the initial accreditation. The programme to be assessed has the right to lodge substantiated internal appeals against the composition of the assessment panel.

The assessment panel must meet the following requirements:

- 1) the assessment panel consists of a maximum of four members, including a student;
- 2) taken as a whole, the assessment panel has the following expertise:
 - a. *Subject/discipline expertise* is focused on the developments in the discipline/subject area. An expert in a particular subject/discipline teaches or has taught in the same or in a related programme with the same orientation and is contributing to the development of professional practice, the discipline or the subject area;
 - b. *International expertise* is present in the assessment panel if the panel is able to make a substantive comparison with related programmes abroad that have the same orientation and level and, to the extent applicable, if the assessment panel has insight into the requirements that international practice in the profession sets for graduates. This latter form of international expertise is important for programmes with a social impact and is required to be present in programmes that prepare students for an international profession;
 - c. *Expertise in a professional field* is indispensable in programmes with a professional orientation. An expert in a professional field possesses a good overview of the requirements that the profession sets for graduates, for instance due to his involvement in umbrella organisations or his managerial position with a large employer or an employer that is characteristic for the profession;
 - d. *Teaching expertise* refers to recent experience teaching or developing courses at the relevant educational level and refers to expertise with respect to the teaching (methods) used by the programme;
 - e. *Student-linked expertise* may be provided by students or recently graduated students up to one year after graduation (Bachelor's or Master's degree); reference date is the date on which the assessment panel is set up by NVAO. NVAO possesses a pool of students that it has trained;
 - f. *Assessment or auditing expertise* is preferably related to higher education.

A combination of these experts should be present in the assessment panel.

The assessment panel is assisted by a NVAO process coordinator and possibly an external secretary, both of whom do not sit on the assessment panel.

- 3) the assessment panel is independent.

The panel members, the secretary and the process coordinator have not had any ties with the institution offering the programme during at least the past five years. Prior to the first visit, all of them certify to not maintaining any connections or ties with the institution in question which could affect an independent judgement on the quality of the programme, in either a positive or a negative sense.

All panel members, the secretary and the process coordinator sign a deontological code. This deontological code will be published on the NVAO website.

5 Assessment process

NVAO bears final responsibility for the implementation of the assessment process.

5.1 Application

The institution submits an application for initial accreditation to NVAO, accompanied by the documentation mentioned in Chapter 6.

Applications submitted by statutory registered institutions must also comprise a positive assessment concerning the macro-efficiency of the programme, issued by the Higher Education Commission or the Flemish Government. In these cases, the application will be submitted within a term of fifteen days following receipt of the said judgement, or following expiry of the term within which the Flemish Government is to pronounce judgement.

5.2 Information dossier

The programme presents an information dossier on the programme for the purpose of the assessment conducted by the assessment panel. The information dossier is a self-contained document that can be read independently. It should follow the standards and underlying criteria set down in the assessment framework.

The initial accreditation framework leaves considerable room for the programme to emphasise its individual character. The programme can make use of this space in the information dossier. The information dossier invites all stakeholders and peers to enter into dialogue on the vision, policy, contents, organisation and outcomes of the programme. Therefore it must be a document in which prospective teachers and enrolled students, if any, recognise the programme.

In the information dossier and when conducting the site visit, it is important that there be no overlap with other assessments (such as the institutional review). The priority is “fitness for purpose”: if it is necessary to refer to institutional or departmental policy, the focus is purely on the policy pursued with respect to the programme concerned. Matters concerning preconditions, such as the set-up of the quality assurance or the staff policy of the institution, are not taken into consideration. They are examined during the institutional review.

The registered institutions – which do not undergo an institutional review – do work out the set-up of the quality assurance system (standard 4) and the staff policy (under standard 2).

The information dossier comprises no more than 25 pages, with a maximum of 10,000 words, including the introduction and excluding the required appendices.

5.3 Site visit

The assessment panel conducts a site visit in order to verify and assess the information dossier. This visit lasts no more than 24 hours.

Prior to the site visit, the panel members peruse the information dossier. On this basis, they form a provisional judgement concerning the programme and formulate corresponding questions for their site visit.

During the site visit, the panel members check whether their provisional judgements are correct and can be substantiated further. To this end, the assessment panel speaks with all those directly involved in the programme: the board of the institution, the (intended) programme coordination, the intended

teachers, students who make use of the same facilities and, when relevant, representatives of the professional field.

In exceptional circumstances, the site visit can be replaced by an interview during a reassessment.

5.4 Assessment procedure within the assessment panel

The assessment panel gives a judgement regarding the standards. After the site visit, the assessment panel may ask for additional information in order to come to a judgement. This judgement is substantiated by weighing positive and critical elements from the findings and conclusions drawn by the assessment panel. All underlying criteria are taken into consideration. The judgement can be either “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory”.

Subsequently, the assessment panel formulates a final conclusion concerning the quality of the programme. This conclusion is also issued according to a two-point scale: “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory”.

Stakeholders, such as panel members, staff or students, may report to NVAO any matters arising during the assessment process that could affect the independence of the assessment.

5.5 Advisory report

The assessment panel sets down its assessment in an advisory report. For each standard, this report reflects the actual substantiated findings of the panel, its considerations, the assessment and any suggestions for improvement.

The advisory report comprises a judgement regarding all the standards. This judgement is substantiated by weighing positive and critical elements from the findings and conclusions of the assessment panel. All underlying criteria are explicitly taken into consideration. In addition, the advisory report comprises a general conclusion with a weighted and substantiated final conclusion regarding the quality of the programme.

The advisory report is preceded by a summarising judgement regarding the quality of the programme, comprising a maximum of two pages and easily readable by a broad public. It also states the final conclusion.

Furthermore, the advisory report includes: basic data on the programme, a score table with the judgements, the composition of the assessment panel, information on the site visit, an overview of the material studied and a list of abbreviations.

After all panel members have consented to the contents of the advisory report, the chairperson of the panel endorses the report. The advisory report is formally authorised and signed by the chairperson and the secretary of the assessment panel and submitted to NVAO for decision-making.

An assessment report comprises a maximum of 20 pages, with a maximum of 8,000 words.

6 NVAO decision-making

NVAO ascertains whether the advisory report meets the criteria and whether the methods and the information sources used are reliable. If the advisory report elicits questions at NVAO, NVAO can invite the assessment panel for a meeting.

NVAO takes a decision within a timeframe of four months after receiving the application. Based on the advisory report, NVAO drafts the initial accreditation report comprising a summarising judgement. NVAO can take two possible decisions: satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

6.1 “Satisfactory” judgements

A “satisfactory” judgement means that NVAO is of the opinion that there are sufficient generic quality guarantees present for the new programme. Before finalising the initial accreditation report, NVAO gives the institution’s board of governors the opportunity to formulate an internal appeal and comments within a period of ten days concerning the draft initial accreditation report. The advisory report by the panel is appended to the initial accreditation report.

NVAO forwards its positive initial accreditation report with the summarising judgement to the institution and to the Flemish Minister responsible for education. The Flemish Government takes a final decision concerning the recognition of a new programme within a period of 30 calendar days following receipt of the NVAO initial accreditation report. The new programme is deemed to be accredited up to and including the completion of the second academic year following the end of the academic year during which the curriculum set down for the new programme was first completed in its entirety.

6.2 “Unsatisfactory” judgements

If NVAO is of the opinion that the new programme provides potentially insufficient generic quality guarantees, then the assessment will lead to a negative initial accreditation report. Before finalising the initial accreditation report, NVAO gives the institution’s board of governors the opportunity to formulate internal appeals and comments on the draft initial accreditation report within a period of ten days. The advisory report by the panel is appended to the initial accreditation report. The institution is also given the opportunity within the same timeframe to withdraw its application.

Statutory registered institutions have the possibility within a period of 60 calendar days to submit a new application on the basis of the same positive judgement regarding their macro-efficiency. In view of the fact that applications for initial accreditation for registered and not yet registered institutions are not bound by a statement on macro- efficiency, they can always submit a new application after withdrawing a previous one.

If the institution does not withdraw its application, then NVAO drafts a negative initial accreditation report with a summarising judgement. The initial accreditation report is presented to the institution and to the Flemish Minister responsible for education.

7 Documentation with the application

The admissibility of the application is based on the completeness of the dossier.
Applications for initial accreditation must contain the following information.

7.1 Basic data on the programme

The administrative data is recorded in the advisory report of the assessment panel, the initial accreditation report and the decision of NVAO.

Administrative data concerning the institution

1. name;
2. status (statutory registered, registered or not registered);
3. address, telephone number, e-mail address, website (if the institution is not registered);
4. name, position, telephone number and e-mail of contact person.

Administrative data concerning the programme

1. the degree, the qualification of the degree, and, in cases arising, the specification of the degree;
2. any specialisations;
3. the location(s) in which the programme is offered;
4. the language used to teach;
5. the length of the programme expressed in credits;
6. the programme-specific learning outcomes;
7. the field of study, a part of a field of study or fields of study in which the programme is classified;
8. the ISCED name of the field of study in which the programme is categorised;
9. the corresponding programme(s) in the Flemish higher education system or, if there are not any, the corresponding programme name in neighbouring countries;
10. in cases arising, the title that holders of the degree earned from this programme can place with their name;
11. with respect to Bachelor's programmes: the post-graduate study opportunities and the possible post-graduate courses; with respect to Master's programmes: the required previous qualifications and admission requirements.

7.2 The information dossier

Any changes the programme makes to the dossier after the decision by the Higher Education Committee must be indicated explicitly.

Explanation of quality guarantees

For each standard, the programme provides explanatory notes to all the underlying criteria. These notes enable the criteria to be verified.

Verifiable facts

1. Decision by the Higher Education Committee and/or Flemish Government with respect to macro-efficiency or an explanation for missing the decision deadline by the Flemish Government;
2. The domain-specific learning outcomes, if available;

3. The intended programme-specific learning outcomes;
4. A schematic overview of the curriculum;
5. An outline description of contents of the curriculum components of the first 60 credits, with a statement of the intended learning outcomes, teaching and working formats, manner of assessment and assessment criteria, literature (required/recommended), number of credits (ECTS cards);
6. A description of the staff: the intended profiles and, if available, short CVs;
7. Overview of the contacts with the professional field (if relevant);
8. The investment plan for the entire programme.

Documents to be reviewed during the site visit

1. Teaching and examination regulations;
2. Reports on consultation in relevant committees / bodies;
3. Available manuals and study material

Colophon

Initial Accreditation Framework - Flanders 2015-2021

28 May 2015

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Programme Accreditation - Flanders 2015-2021

Framework

20 March 2015

draft translation without legal status

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1 Set-up

An existing programme may be accredited if sufficient generic quality guarantees are in place. These generic quality guarantees have been set down in law and their assessment is based on three questions:

1. What is the programme aiming for?
2. How is the programme achieving its aims?
3. To what extent is the programme achieving its aims?

These questions have been translated into three standards, in accordance with the generic quality guarantees. Regarding each of these standards, an assessment panel gives a substantiated judgement: unsatisfactory or satisfactory. The judgement explicitly refers to the underlying criteria. These criteria are printed in bold in the explanations to the standards. In conclusion, the panel gives a substantiated final judgement on the overall quality of the programme.

Registered institutions are not subject to institutional reviews. For that reason, an assessment of the programmes they intend to offer features a fourth question on the set-up and organisation of their internal quality assurance.

2 Assessment framework

2.1 Generic quality guarantee: intended exit level

Standard 1

The determination of the intended exit level of the programme is based on the manner in which the level descriptors have been translated into programme-specific learning outcomes that meet the international requirements with respect to content, level and orientation.

Criteria

As for level and orientation (bachelor's or master's; professional or academic), the intended programme-specific learning outcomes fit into the Flemish qualifications framework and, if available, relevant domain-specific learning outcomes. They tie in with the international perspective of the requirements currently set by the professional field and the discipline with regard to the contents of the programme.

Judgement

The assessment panel gives a well-considered and substantiated judgement according to a two-point scale: "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory".

2.2 Generic quality guarantee: teaching-learning environment

Standard 2

The teaching-learning environment enables the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Criteria

The content and the design of the programme, including the programme-specific teaching and learning formats, the staff deployed and the facilities enable the admitted students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Curriculum, staff and facilities form a cohesive teaching-learning environment for the students.

Judgement

The assessment panel gives a well-considered and substantiated judgement according to a two-point scale: "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory".

2.3 Generic quality guarantee: exit level to be achieved

Standard 3

The programme has an adequate assessment, testing and examination system in place and demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are being achieved.

Criteria

The level realised is apparent, on the one hand, from the validity, reliability and transparency of the assessment, and on the other, from the results of the testing and examination of the students, and the job prospects for graduates or their opportunities for transferring to subsequent study programmes.

Judgement

The assessment panel gives a well-considered and substantiated judgement according to a two-point scale: "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory".

2.4 Generic quality guarantee: set-up and organisation of the internal quality assurance

The fourth generic quality guarantee only applies to programmes provided by registered institutions. These institutions are not subject to institutional reviews.

Standard 4

The set-up and the organisation of the internal quality assurance are aimed at systematically improving the programme with the involvement of the relevant stakeholders.

Criteria

The programme is periodically evaluated, based in part on testable objectives. The outcomes of this evaluation form the basis for verifiable measures for improvement that contribute to the realisation of the objectives. Staff, students, alumni and the relevant (professional) field of the programme are actively involved in the internal quality assurance.

Judgement

The assessment panel gives a well-considered and substantiated judgement according to a two-point scale: “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory”.

Final conclusion

The quality of the programme is “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory”.

3 Assessment scale and assessment rule

3.1 Assessment scale

With respect to each of the above standards, the panel gives a judgement of “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory”. The judgement is based on the underlying criteria, is verifiably substantiated in the assessment report and ties in with the conditions listed below. The concept of generic quality plays an essential role in this regard.

Generic quality

means that the generic quality guarantee is in place and the programme – or a mode of study within the programme – meets the quality that, from an international perspective, can reasonably be expected for a Bachelor’s or Master’s programme in higher education.

Satisfactory

With respect to this standard, the programme meets the generic quality standard: it demonstrates an acceptable level across the entire spectrum of the underlying criteria

Unsatisfactory

The generic quality guarantee is insufficiently present.

3.2 Assessment rule for the final conclusion

A judgement of “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory” with respect to the final conclusion ties in with the conditions listed below.

Satisfactory

The final conclusion concerning a programme is “satisfactory” if all the generic quality standards are assessed as “satisfactory”.

Satisfactory with limited validity

The final conclusion concerning a programme - or a mode of study within a programme - is “satisfactory with limited validity”, i.e., not extending to the full period of accreditation, if upon a first assessment one or two standards are assessed as “unsatisfactory”.

Unsatisfactory

The final conclusion concerning a programme - or a mode of study within a programme - is “unsatisfactory” if one or more of the standards are assessed as “unsatisfactory”.

The final conclusion concerning a programme - or a mode of study within a programme - is “unsatisfactory” if, following a new assessment, one or more of the standards are still assessed as “unsatisfactory”.

The above conditions also apply to the final conclusion regarding programmes provided by registered institutions. In this case, these conditions are applied to the first three standards, while the fourth standard must be assessed as “satisfactory”. In any case, an “unsatisfactory” assessment with respect to the fourth standard will result in a final conclusion of “unsatisfactory”.

4 Composition of the assessment panel

It is imperative for an assessment panels to be authoritative, independent and possess sufficient expertise in order to allow meaningful discussions among peers, other experts and representatives of the programme. A proposal regarding the composition of the assessment panel is submitted to NVAO for advice, before the quality assessment agency makes a final decision regarding the assessment panel.

The assessment panel must meet the following requirements:

- 1) the assessment panel consists of a maximum of four members, including a student;
- 2) taken as a whole, the assessment panel has the following expertise:
 - a. *Subject/discipline expertise* is focused on the developments in the discipline/subject area. An expert in a particular subject/discipline teaches or has taught in the same or in a related programme with the same orientation and is contributing to the development of professional practice, the discipline or the subject area;
 - b. *International expertise* is present in the assessment panel if the panel is able to make a substantive comparison with related programmes abroad that have the same orientation and level and if the assessment panel has insight into the requirements that international practice in the profession sets for graduates. This latter form of international expertise is important for programmes with a social impact;
 - c. *Expertise in a professional field* is indispensable in programmes with a professional orientation. An expert in a professional field possesses a good overview of the requirements that the profession sets for graduates, for instance due to his involvement in umbrella organisations or his managerial position with a large employer or an employer that is characteristic for the profession;
 - d. *Teaching expertise* refers to recent experience teaching or developing courses at the relevant educational level and refers to expertise with respect to the teaching (methods) used by the programme;
 - e. *Student-linked expertise* may be provided by students or recently graduated students up to one year after graduation (Bachelor's or Master's degree);
 - f. *Assessment or auditing expertise* is preferably related to higher education.

A combination of these experts should be present in the assessment panel.

The assessment panel is assisted by a NVAO process coordinator and possibly an external secretary, both of whom do not sit on the assessment panel.

- 3) the assessment panel is independent: its members have not had any ties with the institution offering the programme during at least the past five years.

A secretary whose services are enlisted will not sit on the assessment panel.

The panel members are expected to reach a conclusion in an independent manner and to endorse the code of conduct. Panel members will sign a declaration of independence and confidentiality prior to the assessment process. In this declaration, they attest to having taken note of the code of conduct.

5 Assessment process

The final responsibility for the implementation of the assessment process lies with a quality assessment agency. The agency is EQAR registered or recognised by NVAO. Each quality assessment agency observes an assessment protocol describing, alongside standards and criteria, implementation modalities and processes for the assessment process. The protocol is made public and comprises, as a minimum, the procedures and descriptions listed below.

- the manner in which the quality assessment agency convenes the assessment panels, in order for the panels to be able to form an expert opinion;
- the manner in which the members of the assessment panels are trained, with a view to an unequivocal application of the assessment protocol and the accreditation framework;
- the manner in which the independence of the assessments is safeguarded;
- the possibility for the board of the institution to formulate technical comments and substantive appeals before the panel finalises its external assessment;
- the duty on the part of the assessment panel to respond in writing to any substantive appeals formulated by the board of the institution;
- the manner in which the assessment panel has arrived at its judgement and the manner in which the comparability of the judgements on the criteria, as referred to in the accreditation framework, is safeguarded across the various programmes.

In addition, the quality assessment agency will observe the stipulations of this framework, such as the stipulations pertaining to the assessment process as listed below

5.1 Selfevaluation report

The programme presents a self-evaluation report for the purpose of the assessment conducted by the assessment panel. The programme accreditation framework leaves considerable room for the programme to emphasise its individual character. The programme can make use of this space in the self-evaluation report. The self-evaluation report invites all stakeholders and peers to enter into dialogue on the vision, policy, contents, organisation and outcomes of the programme. Therefore it must be a document in which teachers and students recognise the programme.

The self-evaluation report is a self-contained document that can be read independently. It should follow the programme accreditation framework and be focused on critical self-reflection with respect to each of the standards and underlying criteria. General descriptions of processes and procedures must be avoided. The report must explicitly reflect how recommendations and measures for improvement ensuing from the previous assessment are followed up.

In the self-evaluation report and when conducting the site visit, it is important that there be no overlap with the institutional review. The priority is “fitness for purpose”: if it is necessary to refer to institutional or departmental policy, the focus is purely on the policy pursued with respect to the programme concerned and the results at the programme level. Matters concerning preconditions, such as the set-up of the quality assurance or the staff policy of the institution, are not taken into consideration. They are examined during the institutional review.

The self-evaluation report comprises no more than 25 pages, with a maximum of 10,000 words, including the introduction and excluding the required appendices.

5.2 Site visit

The assessment panel conducts a site visit in order to verify and assess the self-evaluation report. Prior to the site visit, the panel members peruse the self-evaluation report and a representative number of theses for which the programme indicates that they demonstrate the level achieved. For each programme, a minimum of ten theses must be provided, distributed across the locations and specialisations. On the basis of the self-evaluation report and the theses reviewed, the panel members form a provisional judgement concerning the programme and formulate corresponding questions for their site visit.

During the site visit, the panel members check whether their provisional judgements are correct and can be substantiated further. To this end, the assessment panel speaks with all those directly involved in the programme, including students, in order to arrive at substantiated conclusions. The site visit required in the context of a programme assessment has a maximum duration of 24 hours. If similar programmes provided by an institution are assessed simultaneously, the time set aside for the visit must be reduced proportionally.

At the end of the site visit, the chair of the assessment panel informs the programme briefly on the general conclusion and the underlying considerations, without stating a final conclusion or mentioning individual judgements with respect to standards.

5.3 Assessment report

The assessment panel sets down its assessment in an assessment report. For each standard, this report reflects the actual substantiated findings of the panel, its considerations and any suggestions for improvement. It includes notable and representative examples with respect to each standard. The assessment report comprises a judgement regarding all the standards. This judgement is substantiated by weighing positive and critical elements from the findings and conclusions of the assessment panel. All underlying criteria are explicitly taken into consideration. In addition, the assessment report comprises a general conclusion with a weighted and substantiated final conclusion regarding the quality of the programme.

The assessment report is preceded by a summarising judgement regarding the quality of the programme, comprising a maximum of two pages and easily readable by a broad public. Furthermore, the report includes: a score table with the judgements, information on the site visit, basic data regarding the programme, a number of mandatory appendices, an overview of the material studied and the declarations of independence of the panel members (cf. the technical appendix). An assessment report comprises a maximum of 20 pages, with a maximum of 8,000 words.

6 NVAO decision-making

Based on the assessment report, the board of the institution submits an accreditation request to NVAO.

NVAO ascertains whether the assessment report submitted by the institution is in accordance with the rules, of good quality and complete, so that it can arrive at an accreditation decision without any doubt and in a sufficiently substantiated manner. NVAO may request additional information, explanations and clarifications from the quality assessment agency or, as the case may be, from the board of the institution. It will state so in the accreditation report.

In general terms, NVAO will forward a draft decision with detailed substantiation to the board of the institution prior to expiry of the procedural timeframe. The board of the institution is given the opportunity to formulate appeals and comments within a term of fifteen calendar days, commencing on the day after receipt of the draft decision. The procedural rules and regulations that apply for the processing of appeals and comments are summarised in Chapter 9.

NVAO will take an accreditation decision within a term of three months following receipt of the accreditation application. If NVAO fails to take an accreditation decision within the procedural timeframe of three months, the validity of the current accreditation will be extended until the end of the academic year during which the accreditation decision will ultimately be taken.

Once finalised, NVAO will forward the accreditation report and the accreditation decision to the board of the institution and the Minister responsible without delay. Both documents will be published on the NVAO website.

The various decisions NVAO can take are listed below:

The programme is accredited

Accreditation is awarded if, based on the assessment report, NVAO can reasonably decide that the quality of the programme meets all the generic quality guarantees listed in the accreditation framework.

Both the assessment report and the accreditation report reflect the modes of study in place within the programme at the time of the site visit. With respect to programmes comprising more than one mode of study, the assessment must show that each mode of study meets the standards, in order to qualify for a positive accreditation decision.

The programme is accredited with limited validity

If NVAO, on the basis of the assessment report, decides that the programme or a mode of study within the programme does not meet all the generic quality guarantees of the accreditation framework, the validity of the accreditation will be limited to a maximum of three years.

With its accreditation application based on an assessment report featuring one or two unsatisfactory scores, the institution will provide an improvement plan and a timeframe for the realisation of the improvements. NVAO may request advice from the assessment panel prior to making a decision regarding the duration of the accreditation term. Within this term, the board of the institution must have a new external assessment conducted with respect to the generic quality guarantees for which the programme or the mode of study was assessed as unsatisfactory. NVAO will take a new accreditation decision based on this new assessment.

If the validity of an accreditation is limited because the quality of a mode of study fails to meet all the generic quality guarantees as set down in the accreditation framework, the

board of the institution will have the option of a) applying for a new limited assessment of the mode of study and accreditation for a specific period, or b) discontinuing the mode of study and refraining from enrolling any new students with effect from the next academic year.

If the board of the institution decides to discontinue the mode of study following the first evaluation, it may not re-commence this mode of study for the next six years.

If NVAO, on the basis of the assessment report concerning a limited additional assessment, decides that the programme does not meet all the generic quality guarantees of the accreditation framework, the accreditation will expire. In such cases, NVAO will take a negative accreditation decision.

If NVAO, on the basis of the assessment report concerning a limited new assessment, decides that a mode of study does not meet all the generic quality guarantees of the accreditation framework, the institution will be required to discontinue this mode of study and the board of the institution will not be allowed to enrol any new students for that mode of study with effect from the next academic year. The board of the institution may not re-commence the mode of study for the next six years.

The assessment report provides insufficient basis for an accreditation decision

If the assessment report and any additional information provide an insufficient basis for NVAO to reach a sufficiently substantiated decision regarding the accreditation of the programme – or a mode of study within the programme – then the assessment report will be rejected. The term of the current accreditation will be extended by no more than one year. NVAO will forward a draft decision with detailed substantiation to the quality assessment agency and the board of the institution prior to expiry of the procedural timeframe of three months.

The quality assessment agency and the board of the institution are given the opportunity to formulate appeals and comments within a term of fifteen calendar days, commencing on the day after receipt of the draft decision. Within the term by which the current accreditation is extended, as stipulated by NVAO, NVAO charges the quality assessment agency with the implementation of an additional external assessment in accordance with the guidelines and criteria set down by the accreditation organisation. The board of the institution may request another quality assessment agency to perform the additional external assessment.

Subsequently, NVAO will take a decision on the application submitted within a term of two months, provided that the board of the institution submits the application three months before expiry of the extended accreditation term. The validity of the accreditation will be reduced by the length of the extension.

The programme is not accredited

NVAO will take a negative accreditation decision if, based on the assessment report and any additional information, explanations and clarifications regarding a first assessment, it has reached the decision that the programme or mode(s) of study fail(s) to meet a single generic quality guarantee. NVAO will also take a negative accreditation decision if the programme, following an additional limited assessment, fails to meet all the generic quality guarantees. The board of the institution may not re-commence the programme or mode of study for the next six years.

NVAO will forward a draft decision with detailed substantiation to the board of the institution prior to expiry of the procedural timeframe. The board of the institution is given the opportunity to formulate appeals and comments within a term of fifteen calendar days, commencing on the day after receipt of the draft decision. The procedural rules and regulations that apply for the processing of appeals and comments are set down in the NVAO “Rules and Regulations for Administrative Principles”.

7 Documents to be provided with the application

The basic data are stated in the self-evaluation report, the assessment report and the NVAO decision. Accreditation applications must contain the following information.

Administrative data concerning the programme

1. the degree and the qualification of the degree, supplemented with the specification of the degree;
2. specialisations, if any;
3. the location(s) in which the programme is offered;
4. the language used to teach;
5. specification of a study route for working students, if any;
6. the title that holders of the degree earned from this programme can place with their name;
7. the length of the programme expressed in credits;
8. the programme-specific learning outcomes;
9. the date on which the accreditation, the temporary recognition or the recognition as a new programme will expire;
10. the academic year or academic years in which the programme is offered;
11. the field of study, a part of a field of study or fields of study in which the programme is classified;
12. the ISCED name of the field of study in which the programme is categorised.

Administrative data concerning the institution

1. name and address;
2. status (statutory registered or registered).

8 Distinctive quality features

8.1 Back ground

In order to be able to create a distinct profile, a programme may request NVAO to provide a judgement on its distinctive quality features. This may result in a note in the accreditation report indicating that the programme actually has a distinctive quality feature. The conclusion regarding distinctive quality features does not affect the accreditation decision by NVAO.

Points of departure in the assessment of distinctive quality features are:

- The composition of the assessment panel is adequate with a view to the assessment of the distinctive quality feature. In order to ensure this, the programme will apply for assessment of a distinctive quality feature prior to the external assessment procedure;
- A distinctive quality feature must meet the criteria listed below.

8.2 Assessment criteria

Differentiation and profiling

Criterion 1

The distinctive quality feature provides a significant contribution to differentiation and profiling in the higher education system.

Explanation

The programme demonstrates that the distinctive quality feature has a distinctive but not necessarily unique character vis-à-vis other relevant higher education programmes in Flanders.

Judgement

The assessment panel gives a weighted and substantiated judgement according to a four-point scale: “satisfactory”, “good”, “excellent” or “unsatisfactory”.

Quality

Criterion 2

The distinctive quality feature enhances the quality of the programme.

Explanation

The distinctive quality feature is not an isolated feature but enhances the overall quality of the programme. This means that the distinctive quality feature must be reflected in the three standards and must result in a higher assessment score with respect to each of these standards.

Judgement

The assessment panel gives a weighted and substantiated judgement according to a four-point scale: “satisfactory”, “good”, “excellent” or “unsatisfactory”.

Realisation

Criterion 3

The impact of the distinctive quality feature on the quality of the education provided has been operationalised.

Explanation

The distinctive quality feature is visibly and/or quantifiably reflected in the various elements of the teaching-learning environment and the level achieved by the programme.

Judgement

The assessment panel gives a weighted and substantiated judgement according to a four-point scale: “satisfactory”, “good”, “excellent” or “unsatisfactory”.

General conclusion and assessment rule

The assessment panel gives a weighted and substantiated judgement regarding whether or not the distinctive quality feature will be awarded.

Assessment rule: a distinctive quality feature can only be awarded if the programme has at least one “excellent” score and not a single “unsatisfactory” score.

9 Appeals

NVAO will forward a draft decision with detailed substantiation to the board of the institution prior to expiry of the procedural timeframe. The board of the institution is given the opportunity to formulate appeals and comments within a term of fifteen calendar days, commencing on the day after receipt of the draft decision. The procedural rules and regulations that apply for the processing of appeals and comments are set down in the NVAO “Rules and Regulations for Administrative Principles”.

If the accreditation decision regarding a programme turns out negative, the board of the institution may lodge an organised appeal against such negative accreditation decision with the Flemish Government. The appeal must be lodged within a term of 30 calendar days, commencing on the day following the service of the negative accreditation decision to the institution.

All accreditation decisions are open to appeal with the Council of State.

10 Assessment by quality assurance agencies and accreditation organisations

Under the Flemish Higher Education Codex (Codex), institutions are free to decide which quality assurance agencies they commission to assess their programmes. The Codex has recognised the Quality Assurance Administrative Committee of the Flemish Council of Universities and University Colleges as a quality assessment agency in this respect. In addition, institutions may call on other quality assurance agencies registered by EQAR or recognised by NVAO. These cases involve an assessment based on the methods set down in this framework.

On the basis of the assessment report, the board of the institution may apply for accreditation with NVAO.

Furthermore, a foreign accreditation may also be recognised as equivalent. In the assessment of accreditation applications based on already awarded foreign accreditation, NVAO needs to ascertain whether the foreign accreditation has been awarded in accordance with a methodological approach similar to the one applicable to accreditations awarded on the basis of this framework. To that end, NVAO focuses in particular on the accreditation of the individual programme, the assessment of the level achieved by each programme and the presence of a student in the assessment panel. Based on the accreditation decision and underlying assessment report, the board of the institution may apply for accreditation with NVAO. The NVAO accreditation decision will adopt the accreditation term of the decision declared equivalent.

Colophon

Programme Accreditation Framework - Flanders 2015-2021

20 March 2015

NVAO

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ENQA Review 2017
Self-Assessment Report NVAO

Annex 6

Details of NVAO
activities and procedures
including
communication activities

**Annex 6: Details
of NVAO activities
and procedures
including
communication
activities**

A. Primary activities

1. Assessments and accreditation of programmes on the Caribbean islands

The Dutch Minister of Education has requested NVAO in 2005 to assess programmes on the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. At that moment, the islands were still part of the Dutch Antilles. They have come under a different regime in 2010, when Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius became Dutch municipalities and Curacao, Aruba and St. Maarten became independent countries in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The following assessments have been carried out by NVAO since 2012:

Aruba		
University of Aruba	Ba and Ma in Aruban Law	(assessment) 2013/14
	Ba Accounting & Finance	(assessment) 2014/15
	Ba in Organization, Governance and Management	(assessment) 2016
	Ba Hospitality and Tourism Management Studies	(assessment) 2016
	Ba Social Work and Development	(assessment) 2016
Instituto Pedagogico Arubano	Teacher training primary education	(assessment) 2012/13
Curacao		
University of Curacao	Ma Special Educational Needs	(assessment) 2015/16
	Ba/Ma Social Work	(assessment) 2015/16
	Ma Techno MBA	(assessment) 2011/12
	Ba Cultuurstudies	September 2016
	Ba Accountancy and Controlling	(assessment) 2012/13
University of the Dutch Caribbean		
	Ba Business Administration	(assessment) 2012/13

In most cases, no formal accreditation has been given, as NVAO has no mandate. Instead, the NVAO Board has formally established the outcome of the assessments. A number of programmes are still to be assessed in the coming years. NVAO has also assessed four Medical Schools of Medicine in Bonaire, Saba, and St. Eustatius which are aimed at the American medical profession but need Dutch accreditation given the changed legal status of the three islands. The same NVAO panel which carried out these assessments also reviewed the medical programme offered in Aruba.

Bonaire		
Saint James School of Medicine	Ma Doctor of Medicine	(negative) 2011/2012
Saba		
Saba University School of Medicine	Ma Doctor of Medicine	(accreditation) 2011/2012 (mid-term review) 2016
St Eustatius		
The University of Sint Eustatius School of Medicine	Ma Doctor of Medicine	(negative) 2011/2012
Aruba		
Xavier University School of Medicine	Ma Doctor of Medicine	(negative) 2011/2012

As a result of NVAO's expertise on quality standards of higher education and peer review and its application in the Caribbean, a NVAO staff member has been appointed as secretary for the project 'Sustainable higher education and research in the Caribbean' of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The project started in 2015 and its main objective is to realize a sustainable, qualitative high set of programmes for higher education in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This is necessary to promote studying in the region, which has become an important alternative to studying abroad in the Netherlands or in South- and North America for Caribbean students.

2. Recognition of private higher education institutions as 'legal entities' in initial accreditation (NL)

The Dutch Minister of Education drafted a policy regulation concerning recognition of private higher education institutions and requested NVAO to coordinate the recognition procedure. In September 2010 the procedure was renewed by the ministry. NVAO has developed a new protocol including the criteria programmes have to meet to be eligible for recognition. Recognition means that a higher education institution obtains the same rights as a publicly funded institution – with the exception of the right to public funding. If an institution is neither publicly funded, nor recognised, and applies for accreditation of its programmes with NVAO, it will have to apply for recognition first.

In 2016, an appeal procedure established that the legal basis for this procedure was not adequate. The Minister of Education submitted a proposal for adaptation of the existing legislation to Parliament. This adaptation does not affect the role of NVAO in this procedure. The current protocol for the procedure is included in the accreditation framework:

<https://www.nvao.net/beoordelingskaders/beoordelingskaders-accreditatiestelsel-nederland-2014>

3. Associate Degree/HBO5 (NL/FL)

Since 2006, NVAO has decided on applications for Associate Degree (Short cycle) programmes in the Netherlands. Before 2013 the two-year programmes were connected with an accredited bachelor's programmes in the same field of study in an university of applied science. The programmes operate at level 5 of EQF. The curriculum of the Associate Degree and the bachelor's programmes may overlap but should have independent learning outcomes. Before 2013, Associate Degree programmes have been assessed together with the bachelor's programmes. Since September 2013, NVAO has a separate framework in place for accreditation of new and existing Associate Degree programmes. The programmes remain connected with a bachelor's programme, but are assessed separately. A full recognition of Associate Degrees as independent programmes is expected in the coming years. The framework can be found here (in Dutch and English): <https://www.nvao.net/beoordelingskaders/beoordelingskader-associate-degreeprogramma>

In Flanders, Associate Degree programmes (HBO5) were recognized in 2011, after a pilot project for the introduction of the Associate Degrees. NVAO was appointed as accreditation body for the HBO5 programmes. The programmes are strictly professionally oriented and relate to level 5 of the national qualification framework. NVAO developed a framework for assessing the conversion of existing programmes at level 5 in Adult education and Health Care to Associate Degrees. The framework also offers the possibility to have new programmes assessed. The framework for the Flemish HBO5-programmes can be found here (in Dutch and English): <https://www.nvao.net/beoordelingskaders/beoordelingskader-hbo5>

4. Distinctive (quality) features (NL/FL)

In response to the desire of institutions to be able to profile themselves by highlighting specific characteristics or quality aspects, the Dutch and Flemish accreditation frameworks allow institutions or programmes to apply for distinctive (quality) features. The criteria on which the requested features are judged are distinctiveness, concretisation and relevance. Institutions or programmes are free to suggest features, provided they do not overlap with regular accreditation standards.

The assessment of whether the programme or institution qualifies for this feature can be part of a regular assessment for existing programmes, or an institutional audit or review. The distinctive feature can also be applied for separately, outside the accreditation assessment. In that case, the assessment will be performed by a panel with relevant expertise.

A special case are the distinctive (quality) features Internationalization, Entrepreneurship and Small Scale and Intensive Education (only NL), for which NVAO has developed specific frameworks which are more extensive than the three standards for regular distinctive features. Assessment for these features can only be carried out by panels with specific expertise on these topics.

The distinctive (quality) feature **Internationalisation** has been awarded quite frequently since 2012. NVAO took the initiative to develop a methodology for assessing the quality of internationalisation in higher education in 2009. It developed a framework for

assessments at programme and institutional level. This feature has been awarded twice to institutions and 45 times to programmes. From 2012 until 2014, NVAO coordinated a project to develop a Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation (CeQulnt) on behalf of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA). Since 1 January 2016, ECA's assessment framework for this Certificate replaces NVAO's original framework for the distinctive feature Internationalisation. This also means that NVAO now formally awards ECA's Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation.

The ECA framework can be found here:

<https://www.nvao.com/quality-assurance-systemsthe-netherlands/distinctive-quality-feature-internationalisation>

The distinctive (quality) feature **Entrepreneurship** was developed on initiative of the Dutch and Flemish ministries of education. A pilot has been carried out and has led to the finalization of framework for this distinctive feature. Of the participants in the pilot, one minor and one programme obtained the distinctive feature directly, a few other programmes and one institution obtained it after an additional round. The distinctive feature Entrepreneurship was formalized in 2013. The framework requires programmes institutions or substantial minors (at least 25 EC) to argue that they specifically focus on stimulating entrepreneurship in the vision, intended learning outcomes, vision, learning environment, staff and achieved learning outcomes. One institution, one minor and several programmes obtained this distinctive feature since 2013.

The framework can be found here:

<https://www.nvao.com/quality-assurance-systemsthe-netherlands/entrepreneurship>

The distinctive feature **Small Scale and Intensive Education** entitles programmes to demand an increased fee and select students for admission to the programme. The distinctive feature has been granted ca. 18 times since 2012. A framework for this procedure was established in 2012 and is based on the regular standard of the framework for accreditation.

The criteria for the distinctive feature are the following:

- the intended level and ambition of the curriculum and learning outcomes should be significantly higher than for regular programmes;
- the programme should distinguish itself by a societal orientation, interdisciplinary education and a link between the curriculum and relevant extra-curricular activities;
- the didactic concept should be based on small-scale and intensive education, with full commitment by students and intensive interaction between students and between students and teachers;
- facilities should be fit for this kind of teaching and for the development of an 'academic community' of students and teachers.

All Liberal Arts and Sciences programmes (University Colleges) based at Dutch universities have successfully applied for the feature, as have a few mono-disciplinary programmes in academic, professional and Arts education.

With the granting of the specific feature, NVAO sends a positive advice to the Minister of Education for allowing the programme to select students and ask a higher fee. These rights can only be granted by the minister. The framework for the distinctive feature can be found here: <https://www.nvao.com/quality-assurance-systemsthe-netherlands/small-scale-and-intensive-education>

NVAO also provides the opportunity for obtaining the distinctive feature **Sustainability**, which is based on the Auditing Instrument for Sustainability in Higher Education (ASHE). A framework for this has been established in September 2013: <https://nvao.com/beoordelingskaders/protocol-duurzaam-hoger-onderwijs>

B. Procedures related to (initial) accreditation

1. Formation of broad programmes (NL)

Institutions can request NVAO to assess proposals for combining existing and accredited programmes into a single broad programme without going through the formal procedures that apply to starting a new programme. This facilitates institutions to reduce the number of separate programmes. The assessment by NVAO results in an advice to the Dutch Minister for Education, who formally decides on acceptance of the combination as a new programme. NVAO carries out a marginal assessment which is aimed at ensuring that the intended broad programme is not by nature or intent a new programme and that the separate programmes are still recognizable in the combined programme.

The procedure is regularly carried out by desk-research at NVAO. Information for applicants and the protocol for this procedure can be found here (in Dutch only): <https://www.nvao.net/kwaliteitszorgstelselsnederlandoverig/verbreding-opleiding>

2. Extension of the regular duration of programmes (NL)

In the light of international demands in the discipline, or the required level of achieved learning outcomes in specific domains, institutions can apply for extension of the duration of one or more of their programmes. In the Dutch system, the duration of funding for programmes and the rights for student-loans are tied to the formal duration of the programme. Bachelor programmes have a statutory duration of 180 EC which cannot be extended. Master's programmes in principle have a duration of 60 EC.

Extension of the duration of master's programmes is allowed for a particular group of programmes: master's programmes in science and engineering, research master's programmes, master's programmes in 'character languages', such as Chinese, Korean and Japanese, or programmes in International Law. These are under certain conditions allowed to have a duration of two years, comprising 120 EC with extended rights to funding and for study loans for students. NVAO has developed specific protocols for the applications for the extension (see below).

Programmes can apply when they are of the opinion that the intended learning outcomes that are required in international perspective or by the professional domain, cannot be achieved within a curriculum of 60 EC. At the request of the Dutch Minister of Education, NVAO has developed protocols for judging applications for extension. It is up to an expert

panel and NVAO to formulate an advise and up to the Minister of Education to decide on this. Until 2012, NVAO has assessed 29 applications of this kind. New programmes that require a longer duration than the legal duration of 60EC will need to have this assessed during initial accreditation. For some disciplines and for specific programmes, the Dutch law has already defined a longer than regular duration. The initial accreditation should in these cases confirm that the programme qualifies as belonging to these categories.

Both the generic and the specific (character languages and international law) protocol for the extension of the duration can be found here (in Dutch only): <https://www.nvao.net/beoordelingskaders/protocol-verlenging-studieduur-nl>

Research master's programmes (NL)

Research master's programmes in the Netherlands have an extended duration of 120 EC and can be established in all academic domains. They are specifically oriented towards preparing students for a research career in the university or outside the academic environment. The programmes are to be distinguished from regular master's programmes in the Sciences which also have a duration of 120 EC but are considered to be 'regular' programmes.

Until September 2015, NVAO collaborated with the Netherlands Royal Academy of Sciences (KNAW) in the assessment of the research master's programmes. NVAO has drafted a special framework which defined additional criteria to be used in the assessment for (initial) accreditation of these programmes. The KNAW established standing committees for this purpose and NVAO used to coordinate two assessment rounds each year and draft the reports. The assessments differed from regular procedures as the site visit was replaced by a hearing before the committee at the site of the KNAW in Amsterdam. Later on, these hearings were held on location at the institutions.

This arrangement has ended in September 2015. Since then, the assessment of research master's programme has been integrated into the assessment procedure for regular master's programmes. In 2016, NVAO has drafted a new set of additional criteria for research master's programmes to be used in the assessments for (initial) accreditation. This set is based on the previous framework but is less prescriptive and allows institutions the freedom to fill in the specific orientation towards research which characterises the programmes. NVAO developed this new set of criteria in consultation with the Dutch rector's conference VSNU. It will come into force from 1 January 2017. The involvement of NVAO with the development of research master's programmes also led to three thematic analyses on these programmes.

The current and the new frameworks can be found here: <https://www.nvao.com/procedures/additional-criteria-research-masters>

The thematic analyses on research master's programmes from 2007 and 2011 can be found here:

<https://www.nvao.net/actueel/publicaties/research-master-review>.

See Annex 10 on the most recent analysis, which is not published.

3. Reduction or expansion of study loads (FL)

In Flanders, university colleges and universities can submit an application for the reduction (for programmes of 90 or 120 EC) or the expansion (60 to 90 or 120 EC) of study loads for master's degree programmes to the Flemish Government. NVAO has been asked to advise the Flemish Government whether the applications meet the criteria that have been formulated in the 'Act of 19 July 2013 containing measures pertaining to changes in the study load of higher education programmes'.

The 'Operational Framework for the Expansion of Study Loads in Master's Programmes' (13 June 2013) describes how university colleges and universities can apply for the expansion of the study loads and how they should justify their request. The expansion of study loads of subject-based degree programmes is justified on the basis of at least one of the criteria 'study load', or 'learning outcomes', or the criterion 'labour market'. Applications for the organisation of research master's programmes are justified on the basis of three criteria: 'career progress', 'research focus', and 'intended exit level'. If the aforementioned criteria are met, NVAO should also ascertain whether the institutions have the relevant capacity to offer the programmes with an expanded study load. In the years 2013-15, NVAO handled 1, 7 and 2 applications respectively, and advised positively on 6 applications (3 subject-degree programmes on a total of 7 applications and 3 research master's programmes).

The reduction of study loads for master's degree programmes should be justified by means of the following criterion: the study loads of comparable programmes in the European Higher Education Area is less than 90 or 120 EC and the learning outcomes of the master's degree programme can be achieved with a study load of less than 90 or 120 EC. No separate operational framework has been developed for the reduction of study loads of master's degree programmes. Heretofore, NVAO has not received applications for the reduction of study loads of master's degree programmes.

The relevant protocols and legislation can be found here (in Dutch only): <https://www.nvao.net/beoordelingskaders/beoordelingskader-studieomvang>

4. Approval of changes in the names of programmes (NL)

Since 2014, NVAO has the formal task of checking whether the names of programmes are in line with their content. Institutions can also apply to NVAO for a change of the name of a programme. In most cases, the change of name is taken along with the assessment for accreditation, so the panel can judge the intended new name. If a request is submitted separate from an assessment, NVAO can ask experts for an advice. Small editorial changes without consequences for the position of the programme in its domain can be decided upon by the NVAO without expert advice. Criterion for granting permission for the change of names is also that the new name does not have the effect of starting a new programme.

Information for applicants, the protocol, and links to relevant legislation can be found here (in Dutch only): <https://www.nvao.net/beoordelingsproceduresnederland/naamswijziging-opleiding>

5. Approval of degrees (NL)

Since 2014, the degree that is awarded by programmes in higher education, and the added specification per domain (of Arts, Science or the domain), are regulated in the accreditation decision. Since 2014, Dutch programmes have to specify the degree in the application for accreditation. Since then, the specifications 'of Arts', 'of Science' and 'of Laws' are also permitted for programmes in professional education, instead of the domain related degrees. This transition is done in phases: the additions of Arts or of Science can only be used if 70% of programmes in a domain has passed re-accreditation. NVAO registers the progress of this transition and regularly publishes an updated list of the programmes that are allowed to use the new degree.

Information on the relevant legislation and regular updates of the various domains for which the new degrees are valid is presented here for the Netherlands (in Dutch only): <https://www.nvao.net/kwaliteitszorgstelselsnederlandlijsten/maandoverzicht-nieuwe-hbo-titulatuur-70-regeling>,

and here for Flanders (in Dutch only): <https://www.nvao.net/kwaliteitszorgstelselsvlaanderenoverig/titulatuur-vlaanderen>

6. Additional admission criteria

Normally, the only criterion for admission to a Bachelor programmes in Dutch higher education is a relevant diploma in secondary education. Institutions may apply to the Dutch Minister of Education for the right to use additional criteria for the admission of students to bachelor programmes that prepare for specific professions or are based on a specific educational concept. These criteria concern knowledge and skills. Examples of programmes that make use of such additional criteria are the Hospitality programmes (Hotelschool) and programmes in Arts.

The permission to use additional admission criteria is granted by the Minister of Education on advice by NVAO. The assessment is based on an information dossier that can be assessed by NVAO or, if needed, by a panel of independent experts. The assessment can be included in an initial accreditation procedure. The permission by the Minister does not have to be renewed with a new accreditation. NVAO handled two applications for this procedure, one by desk research, the other by panel assessment.

The protocol for the procedure can be found here:

<https://www.nvao.net/beoordelingskaders/protocol-toetsing-aanvullende-eisen-bij-toelating-bachelor-vanwege>

Other related activities

1. Higher Education Register (FL)

Another NVAO task concerns the online development and database administration of the Higher Education Register in Flanders (HOR, <http://www.highereducation.be>). This website presents the registration status for all formally registered bachelor and master's programmes in Flanders.

2. Academisation (FL)

Since 2004, all former second cycles programmes offered by Flemish university colleges were converted to academic bachelor's and master's programmes. The programmes were required to develop into full academic programmes, but also with a professional orientation. The conversion involved the inclusion of the development of academic research skills of students. In 2013, all involved programmes were supposed to meet the same requirements as the academic programmes of universities. NVAO incorporated the transition in the accreditation framework and developed a manual 'Academisation' and a manual 'Academisation Arts programmes'.

For each cluster of study programmes NVAO made a comparative analyses of the scores, textual appreciations and recommendations by the review panels in order to decide consistently on the possible conclusions (positive, negative, additional information, hearing or additional assessment) with respect to academisation. NVAO has continued this practice until 2013, when the transition of the programmes to academic programmes was supposed to have been completed.

C. Projects or assessments at the request of the Ministry of Education (NL)

1. Flexibilisation

In the Netherlands and Flanders the share of adults in the student population of higher education is low (about 11%). In several other European countries this percentage is above 30%. In view of the importance of lifelong learning in present-day society, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands installed the committee Rinnooy Kan which had the task to formulate recommendations for increasing the participation of adults in higher education. One of the recommendations of the committee was to start an experiment related to learning outcomes. The experiment allows programmes to let go of the 'supply approach' based on pre-structured courses, and implement a 'demand and output approach'. In the latter model, programmes only formulate intended learning outcomes; the individual learning path is discussed and established jointly by the learning mentor (teacher) and the student. Acknowledged prior learning, the student's preferences and the (possible) workplace (as learning environment) of the student are taken into account. This experiment started in September 2016 and has a duration of six years. NVAO is involved in advising the Minister on applications for participation in the experiment. It has an active and dual role in this experiment: NVAO's judgement contributes to the trust in the experimental process, and, eventually, NVAO is responsible for the accreditation process of the programmes taking part in the experiment.

Relevant documentation (in Dutch

only): <https://www.nvao.net/actueel/publicaties/documentatie-experimenten-flexibiliseren-leeruitkomsten>

2. Teacher training programmes

Both in the Netherlands and Flanders, the quality of teacher training programmes for primary and secondary education has received criticism in recent years. The assessment and subsequent accreditation of these programmes by the NVAO took place between 2014 and 2016. The assessment concerned the academic and professional first and second degree teacher training programmes (secondary education) and the programmes for primary education teachers. It also comprised the special trajectories 'Teacher Training School', 'Academic Extension', and 'Education minors in bachelor's programmes'. At the request of the Ministry of Education, NVAO has drafted protocols for the assessment of these trajectories in 2013.

'Teacher Training Schools' (Opleidingsscholen) and the **'Academic Extension'**

(Academische Kop) are partnerships of one of more teacher training programmes with primary or secondary education schools with the aim of integrating theoretical and practical training of students. These schools can extend their activities also in the realm of practical research and school development. The assessments led to an advice to the Ministry of Education in the Netherlands.

Educational minors offer the opportunity to students of academic, discipline oriented bachelor programmes to obtain a teaching qualification. In 2009 the Minister of Education asked NVAO to advise regarding the quality of plans for Educational minors, which was repeated with the protocol of 2013. Research in February 2011 showed that the running Educational minors do meet the expectations of the graduates and the schools where they start to work.

Academic teacher training for primary education (**'Academische pabo'**) is a special programme for students attending an academic bachelor programme educational sciences, with interest in primary education. These students can follow at the same time the professional bachelor's programme Teacher training primary education. This dual programme has a duration of four years (240 EC) and was introduced to enlarge the number of teachers in primary education and to increase the quality of graduates Teacher primary education. The Minister requested NVAO to advise on the quality of these dual programmes. This assignment was included in the assessments

In the course of 2015 and 2016, NVAO has handled the applications for the teaching training programmes and the trajectories in clusters of applications for each of the various types of programmes and the mentioned trajectories. This provided NVAO with an overview of the state of the programmes in the domains. NVAO has also produced thorough thematic analyses on the state of the teacher training programmes in primary and secondary education. Eventually, the assessment showed that good progress had been made in the quality of the programmes, although the academic programmes fared less well than the professionally oriented programmes. See also Annex 10 on the analyses.

Framework for the assessment of the 'Opleidingsschool en academische kop' (in Dutch only): <https://www.nvao.net/kwaliteitszorgstelselsnederlandoveriglerarenopleidingen/academische-opleidingsschool>;

Framework for the assessment of educational minors (in Dutch only): <https://www.nvao.net/kwaliteitszorgstelselsnederlandoverig/educatieve-minor>

D. International projects

1. ARQATA (2011-2014)

NVAO and ANQA – the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation in Yerevan, Armenia – have been engaged in a three years' (2011-2014) project funded by the World Bank with a budget of \$ 261.825. The project goes under the name of ARQATA: Armenia quality assurance technical assistance. The project aimed at the further development of a quality assurance system and a quality culture in Armenian higher education. NVAO and a team of international experts offered guidance and assistance to ANQA, universities and other relevant stakeholders. The main activities involved training sessions, seminars, workshops, stakeholders' conferences, pilot procedures both for institutional and programme accreditation, a proof external review of ANQA, and two international study visits. Of particular interest was the involvement of students in all activities. The shared ownership made for a great commitment at different levels, and all parties (QA agencies, universities, students, and peers) recognized the added value of their joint enterprise.

The NVAO presented the project at EQAF in 2013 as a good practice of cross-border cooperation, in a workshop entitled 'ARQATA – An International QA Development Project. Joint Efforts in a Post-Soviet Region.' Both the EQAF Steering Committee and the participants of the workshop showed an interest in how NVAO and its Armenian counterpart managed a project preparing developing countries to successfully cooperate with international expert agencies to further improve their quality assurance system. The workshop focused on a step-by-step approach of a quality assurance development project, and identified challenges and opportunities. Hands-on advice was offered to the participating universities and quality assurance agencies. At the end, ARQATA was presented as a sample project.

Final report of the project: <https://www.nvao.net/actueel/publicaties/final-report-arqata>.

2. CeQuInt

The overall aim of the CeQuInt project was to assess, reward and enhance internationalisation. The project developed an assessment methodology that can be used to assess the internationalisation of a programme or an institution and which, if completed successfully, leads to the award of a Certificate for Quality Internationalisation. The partnership encompassed 14 partners from 11 countries, consisting of quality assurance agencies from Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Croatia, Germany (2), Finland, France (2), the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and Spain (2), the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

For the framework see <https://www.nvao.com/quality-assurance-systemsthe-netherlands/distinctive-quality-feature-internationalisation>.

3. JoQar

The overall purpose of the project was to ensure that joint programmes are facilitated in two specific areas: accreditation and recognition. The project looked into cross-border quality assurance of joint programmes and recognition of degrees awarded by these programmes. The project partnership included quality assurance/accreditation agencies (QA/A agencies) and recognition bodies (ENIC-NARICs).

The external quality assurance and accreditation (QA/A) of joint programmes is a challenge for both joint programmes and QA/A agencies as it normally includes multiple national accreditation procedures. The project instead promoted single accreditation procedures through the development of a multilateral recognition agreement regarding QA and accreditation results and by the establishment of a European coordination point for external QA and accreditation of joint programmes.

4. Faboto

On 29-30 October 2015, NVAO hosted a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) on the Assessment and Demonstration of Achieved Learning Outcomes. The event was organized in collaboration with the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Erasmus+ agency EP Nuffic.

The European Standards and Guidelines, especially with the 2015 adjustment agreed upon in Yerevan, emphasize the centrality of learning outcomes in the concept of student-centred learning and teaching (see: ESG 2015). The PLA responded to the findings in the Bucharest Communiqué of 2012 which underlines that the adoption of learning outcomes to describe the final qualifications of study programmes has been accepted well in higher education in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), but assessing and demonstrating achieved learning outcomes still need attention.

The PLA brought together some 100 professionals from 13 countries and just as many experiences with implementing student-centred learning and learning outcomes. The discussions during the PLA made it clear that the topic of achieved learning outcomes brings up a number of issues connected with the use of learning outcomes in general on which there still is a lot of uncertainty and difference of opinion among stakeholders. These issues include the technique and idiom used in formulating learning outcomes, the balance between formalism and autonomy in the use of learning outcomes in developing programmes, the involvement of students and other stakeholders, and the role of internal and external quality assurance in all of this. Besides, the contexts of higher education and the practices of implementing learning outcomes differ a lot.

In the light of the current state of the debate and in response to the hesitation expressed at the PLA towards directive guidelines, it is fitting that the results of the event are presented in the resulting document as observations and recommendations on themes that are relevant to the assessment and demonstration of achieved learning outcomes.

The resulting documents can be found here: <https://www.nvao.net/actueel/publicaties/report-achieved-learning-outcomes-recommendations-and-good-practices>

E. Communication activities: List of conferences and seminars (2012-2016)

2016

NVAO 'Samenarij' I & II on the Flemish institutional review, 30 September 2015 and 3 February 2016.

In preparation of the round of institutional reviews in Flanders, NVAO has organised two seminars to inform and consult representatives of the Flemish institutions, the first on 30 September 2015, the second on 3 February 2016. At the seminars, the NVAO team of process coordinators presented themselves to the institutions. In interactive sessions, NVAO explained the appreciative approach that was chosen for the reviews and provided information on the procedures and intentions of the new system in Flanders.

During the second seminar, the representatives from the institutions were asked to reflect on the way the appreciative approach was carried through in their own context in the preparation of the reviews. The NVAO discussed the intentions and the programme of the site visit. A great success were the 'speed date' sessions – short interviews in which the representatives of the institutions discussed their experiences and dilemmas in the preparation of the reviews. Another important issue was the public information on the quality of programmes. The outcomes of the speed date were also discussed with representatives of the Flemish student union. Both NVAO and the participants of the 'Samenarij' were positive about the open exchange during the sessions.

3, 8 en 9 March 2016: Workshops New Dutch Accreditation system (3.0)

As part of the development of the new frameworks for accreditation in the Netherlands, NVAO has organised three workshops for representatives from Dutch institutions. Some 150 participants took part in these sessions, in various parts of the country. The workshops were intended to inform the institutions on the contours of the new system and the design of a pilot round with institutional accreditation. The institutions were also asked to give feedback and express wishes for the implementation of the new system as it was presented to them in a letter to Parliament from the minister of education of 18 February 2016 in preparation for a proposal for the new frameworks.

26-27 May 2016: Good Practices Workshop

Together with the umbrella organisations Flanders Knowledge Area (Flanders) and EP-Nuffic (the Netherlands), NVAO organized the Good Practices Workshop dealing with good practices in internationalization in higher education in VIVES university college in Kortrijk. Earlier versions of this workshop on related topics, such international partnerships, were held from 2012-2015 in various institutions in the Netherlands and Flanders, such as: Rijksuniversiteit Groningen (2015); Universiteit Hasselt (2015); Avans Hogescholen Breda (2014); ISS in Den Haag (2013); Thomas More Mechelen (2013); Universiteit Antwerpen (2012).

7 juli: NVAO Meet & Greet

Since 2015, NVAO organises a Meet & Greet for its stakeholders in higher education and its own staff just before the summer holidays. In 2016, this took place on 7 July and featured prof. dr. ir. K.I.J. (Karen) Maex, rector magnificus and member of the Executive Board of the University of Amsterdam. In 2015, dr. Kees Boele, chairman of the Executive Board of HAN University of Applied Sciences was guest speaker.

2015

26 januari: NVAO Conference 2015

On 26 January 2015, NVAO held its biannual conference in Brussels, in the building of the Flemish Parliament. The conference also marked the tenth anniversary of NVAO. It was chaired by Annelies Beck, a Flemish author and journalist. The programme comprised a key-note address by NVAO chairman Anne Flierman on "Quality in Development", a panel interview with Dirk van Damme (Head of the Innovation and Measuring Progress Division (IMEP) - OECD), Anne De Paepe (rector Ghent University); Ron Bormans (chair of the Board of Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences); Ann Vancoillie (administrator of Creaplan; CEO ALUVISION nv; chair of Unizo Internationaal; WOMED Award 2012) and Klaasjan Boon (LSVb – Dutch Student Union).

After breakout sessions in the afternoon vice-chair of NVAO Ann Demeulemeester talked about "Hitting a moving target". The conference concluded with an interview with Hilde Crevits, the Flemish Minister of Education, and Jet Bussemaker, Minister of Education in the Netherlands.

29-30 October: Peer Learning Event: Assessment and Demonstration of Achieved Learning Outcomes

The NVAO and the Dutch ministry of education, culture and science (OCW) organized a Peer Learning Event on the Assessment and Demonstration of the Achievement of Learning Outcomes on 29-30 October 2015 in The Hague, The Netherlands. The conference was part of the EU-financed project Facilitating Bologna Tools of the Dutch Ministry of Education (OCW), the National Agency Erasmus+ and NVAO. The programme involved active participation by the participants. The concluding session was devoted to a discussion on how to formulate guidelines on the basis of the cases presented the day before. The participants came from Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and Quality Assurance Agencies (QA) from Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Spain, France, Portugal, Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Croatia, Poland. There was also a delegation from EURASHE and a considerable number of participants from Dutch institutions of higher education and quality assurance agencies.

3 December: NVAO-ECA Winter Seminar

On 3 December 2015, NVAO and ECA organized the Winter Seminar 2015, which had as its theme "National Implementation of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes". Under the guidance of Chair Ann Demeulemeester (Vice Chair NVAO) and René-Paul Martin (Acting Chair of ECA and CTI France) in The Hague, The Netherlands. More than 100 representatives of Dutch and Flemish higher education institutions and international quality assurance agencies were present.

2014

9 December: NVAO-ECA Winter Seminar "Employability and Quality Assurance"

In collaboration with the European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA), NVAO organized the Winter Seminar "Employability and Quality Assurance", on 9 December 2014, in The Hague, in which 125 guests participated. The seminar featured the presentation of the research paper "Employability of professional bachelors from an international perspective" by the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) of Twente University.

2013

17 January: ECA Winter Seminar "Mutual recognition and the Bucharest Communiqué"

Together with the European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA), NVAO organised the ECA Winter Seminar in The Hague, in which 50 guests participated. The seminar focused on the implications of the Bucharest Communiqué on the mutual recognition of the outcomes of external quality assurance.

6 February: NVAO Spring Conference 2013

NVAO held its Spring Conference 2013 at the WTC in Rotterdam on 6 February. Anouschka Laheij chaired the conference which had as its main theme: "Quality as Culture". The conference comprised eight breakout sessions and had 270 participants from higher education institutions.

27 March: seminar "The internationalised curriculum"

The NVAO seminar "The internationalised curriculum" was chaired by Lucien Bollaert (Executive Board NVAO) and brought together 120 guests who focused on dealing with internationalising the curriculum and the questions programmes have implementing international and intercultural learning outcomes in their curriculum.

20-21 June: JOQAR Dissemination Conference Quality Assurance and Recognition of Joint Programmes: The Art and the Passion

The European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA) has organised on 20 and 21 June 2013 the JOQAR Dissemination Conference: "Quality Assurance and Recognition of Joint Programmes: The Art and the Passion" at Círculo de Bellas Artes in Madrid, Spain. Conclusion of the conference was: "ECA provides tools to simplify accreditation and recognition of Joint Programmes." The conference programme provided the participants with the latest update on the solutions developed by ECA in the framework of the JOQAR project (acronym of Joint programmes - Quality Assurance and Recognition of degrees awarded). The project is co-funded by the European Commission.

2 July: Good Practices Seminar Internationalisation 2 The Hague

The series of Good Practices Seminars Internationalisation started in 2012 at Antwerp University. After this succesfull start, it continued at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague on 2 July 2013. It is aimed at Dutch and Flemish institutions of higher education and deals with the practice of internationalization. Keynote speaker of the seminar was Abiodun Williams (president The Hague Institute for Global Justice). In

the afternoon Freddy Weima (Nuffic) explored the tensions between internationalization of higher education and development aid. The programme comprised a number of other sessions on various themes. NVAO's quality criteria for internationalization were an important theme during the day.

13 September: OCW-NVAO seminar opleidingsschool 2013

On 13 September 2013, the Dutch ministry of education and NVAO organised the seminar 'Opleidingsschool 2013' (Training School 2013). After a welcome speech by Ann Demeulemeester (Vice Chair NVAO) and Justus de Hooge (Head of Department of the Directorate Teachers of the Dutch Ministry of Education) the two institutions provided information on the 'Compensation programme' by the ministry and the upcoming round of assessments by NVAO. NVAO Policy Officers and Project Supervisors Irma Franssen and Astrid Koster explained the new assessment framework and replied to questions.

3-4 October: 'Dutch Days' Moscow

NVAO was present at the international conference on higher education organized by Nuffic Neso Russia, during the 'Dutch Days', which were part of the Holland-Russia Year 2013. Nuffic Neso organized seminar, meetings and an elaborate Holland Paviljoen during the internationale education days in Moscow and St. Petersburg. De Dutch Days in St. Petersburg were organised in collaboration with the Netherlands Institute (NIP).

11 December: ECA-NVAO Winter Seminar "MOOCs and External Quality Assurance"

In collaboration with the European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA) NVAO organized the Winter Seminar in The Hague. The central theme of the seminar was: MOOCs and External Quality Assurance.

12 December: Good Practices Seminar Internationalisation 3

On 12 December, 2013, NVAO organized the third Good Practices Seminar at the campus of Thomas More University College in Mechelen, together with Nuffic and Flanders Knowledge Area. During the workshop, the NVAO criteria for internationalization were discussed.

13 December: NVAO-LOCO seminar Co-Creation: Working together towards Quality Culture

In collaboration with the national association of programmes in communication studies (LOCO), NVAO organised the seminar Co-Creation: Working together towards Quality Culture in the Hague. The seminar focused on working together with professionals from communication studies programmes to find ways to establish a quality culture in the domain and raise the quality of education. The seminar resulted in a joint analysis report, see annex 9.

18 December and 29 November: information sessions on the institutional review and the new Flemish accreditation system

In collaboration with the Flemish government, NVAO convened two information sessions for stakeholders at Ghent University College and Thomas More University College in Mechelen on the new design of the institutional review and the new accreditation system in Flanders.

2012

12 January: Good Practices in Internationalisation

The NVAO seminar "Good Practices in Internationalisation" took place in The Hague at the NVAO. Six institutions presented a good practice related to their internationalization practices. The 140 participants eventually chose the practice of Hanzehogeschool Groningen as Best Practice. At the seminar, NVAO initiated the GPIIP platform aimed at bringing together experiences with internationalization and sharing knowledge.

14-15 June Madrid: Conference on the Training of QA Panel Members

NVAO assisted at the conference on the Training of QA Panel Members, as part of the E-TRAIN project.

5 July: seminar The importance of research in education

On Wednesday, July 5th, 2012 NVAO organized symposium "The importance of research in education." to mark the retirement of Vice President Guido Langouche, at KU Leuven. Guest speakers were Prof. S.C.J.J. Kortmann (Rector University of Nijmegen), Prof. L. Melis (Vice Rector KU Leuven) and prof. G. Boulton (former Vice-Chancellor University of Edinburgh). Em. prof. dr. G. Langouche continued to remain in the post of Secretary of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) on behalf of NVAO until the end of the current term on July 1, 2013.

6 November: Good Practices Seminar Internationalisation, Antwerp University

From 2012 umbrella organisations Flamenco / Flanders Knowledge Area and Nuffic organised a series of seminars on good practices in internationalisation in Dutch and Flemish higher education. The first seminar took place on 6 November 2012 at the University of Antwerp.

27 November: Discussion meeting Pilot Entrepreneurship

On 27 November 2012, NVAO organised a discussion meeting for the participants in the pilot for the distinctive feature 'Entrepreneurship' to evaluate the results to date and share experiences.

12 December: Second Peer Coaching meeting for panel secretaries

On 24 May and 12 December 2012, NVAO organised a second peer coaching meeting for more than 30 certified panel secretaries. The meeting on 24 May was attended by some 70 participants.

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Annex 7

Differentiation in judgements in the Netherlands and Flanders

Annex 7
Differentiation in
judgements in the
Netherlands and
Flanders

Table 1 2012-2015 Differentiation in judgements programme accreditation NL

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016*
Application(s) withdrawn	1		2	1	1
Academic programmes					
Excellent	8 %	1%			
Good	6%	18%	10%	6%	4%
Satisfactory	83%	77%	80%	83%	90%
Recovery period	2%	4%	9%	11%	4%
	(6 prgs)	(13 prgs)	(37 prgs)	(24 prgs)	(2 prgs)
Professional programmes					
Excellent	1%	2%	2%	--	
Good	14%	13%	11%	22%	--
Satisfactory	79%	74%	80%	76%	94%
Recovery period	5%	11%	6%	3%	--
	(6 prgs)	(19 prgs)	(15 prgs)	(5 prgs)	

* Until 30 June 2016.

Table 2 2012-2015 Differentiation in judgements programme accreditation Flanders

	2014	2015	2016*
Academic programmes			
Excellent			
Good		20%	56%
Satisfactory	90%	74%	38%
Recovery period	10% (5 prgs)	6% (5 prgs)	5% (3 prgs)
Professional programmes			
Excellent			
Good	13%	17%	25%
Satisfactory	80%	70%	67%
Recovery period	8% (2 prgs)	13% (11 prgs)	8% (1 prg)

* Until 30 June 2016

	2012 (no data)	2013
Universities		
Satisfactory		100%
Recovery period		0%
University colleges		
Satisfactory		92%
Recovery period		8%

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Annex 8

Internal quality
assurance,
feedback analysis and
samples of surveys

Table of content	1. Workplan NVAO Internal Quality Assurance 2016	p.5
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	3. Feedback analysis: measures for improvement formulated on the basis of surveys of primary accreditation activities by NVAO, Spring 2016	p.11
	4. Samples of feedback in online surveys	p.12
	- A. Initial accreditation	p.12
	- B. Institutional audit	p.15
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Annex 8: NVAO Internal quality assurance, feedback analysis and samples of surveys

1. NVAO Internal Quality Assurance – work plan 2016 - evaluation and improvement activities

1. External evaluation assessment processes: (Initial) Accreditation, Institutional audit / - review	
Respondents: Higher Education Institutions	
C	<p>Web-based survey (IQA team)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initial accreditation: every completed application when the proposal for decision is sent - Institutional audit (NL): every completed application when the final decision is sent - Institutional review (FL): part of the governmental evaluation in autumn 2016 and 2017 - Accreditation NL: till 2015 synchronised with the evaluation Institutional audit, in 2015 all private institutions, in 2016 all funded institutions - Accreditation FL: in 2016 all institutions
A	The analysed evaluation results are presented by e-mail, intranet and the weekly meeting at Tuesday to the entire organisation. Received feedback is added to the evaluation results which are one of the sources of formulated measures for improvement by the Management Team.
P	The Management Team adds the measures for improvement to the yearly activity plan.
D	The measures for improvement are processed and included in the assessment processes as manuals and instructions. The entire organisation is informed about updates by e-mail, intranet and the weekly meeting on Tuesday.
2. External evaluation of Process coordination	
Respondents: Panel members and External secretaries	
C	<p>Web-based survey from 1 January 2016 on (IQA team)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initial accreditation: every completed application when the proposal for decision is sent - Institutional audit (NL): every completed application when the final decision is sent - Institutional review (FL): part of the governmental evaluation in autumn 2016 and 2017
A	<p>The analysed generic evaluation results are presented by e-mail, intranet and the weekly meeting at Tuesday to the entire organisation. Received feedback is added to the evaluation results which are one of the sources of formulated measures for improvement by the Management Team.</p> <p>Evaluation results of separate applications are presented to the involved process coordinator only. Up till now the direct manager of the process coordinator is not informed (current HR policy).</p>
P	The Management Team adds the measures for improvement to the yearly activity plan.
D	The measures for improvement are processed and included in the assessment processes as manuals and instructions. The entire organisation is informed about updates by e-mail, intranet and the weekly meeting on Tuesday.
3. Internal evaluation of NVAO's assessment panel	
Respondents: NVAO process coordinators	
C	Written feedback on the functioning of the panel and the external secretary by the process coordinator is part of the note for the board decision on the application.
A	Negative feedback on the functioning of the panel or the secretary is on direction of the board added to NVAO's panel database eQu or the list of external secretaries in order to reconsider the participation of the panel member or secretary on complete information (IQA team).
P	The board can decide to eliminate a panel member or secretary from the database or list.
D	Process coordinators and NVAO secretariats are informed about the elimination of a panel member or secretary.
4. Internal evaluation of projects cluster applications for Accreditation	
Project group members and board member	
C	Completed questionnaire followed by oral discussion of the evaluation results in the project group (applied in 2014 for the first time, IQA team).
A	The analysed evaluation results are presented by e-mail, intranet and the weekly meeting at Tuesday to the entire organisation. Received feedback is added to the evaluation results which are one of the sources of formulated measures for improvement by the Management Team.

	P	The Management Team adds the measures for improvement to the yearly activity plan.
	D	The measures for improvement are processed and included in the assessment processes as manuals and instructions. The entire organisation is informed about updates by e-mail, intranet and the weekly meeting on Tuesday.
5. Internal evaluation of other projects		
Project group members and board member		
	C	Completed questionnaire followed by oral discussion of the evaluation results in the project group (applied in 2014 for the first time, IQA team). Example: the project process coordination in 2014/2015.
	A	The analysed evaluation results are presented by e-mail, intranet and the weekly meeting at Tuesday to the entire organisation. Received feedback is added to the evaluation results which are one of the sources of formulated measures for improvement by the Management Team.
	P	The Management Team adds the measures for improvement to the yearly activity plan.
	D	The measures for improvement are processed and included in the assessment processes as manuals and instructions. The entire organisation is informed about updates by e-mail, intranet and the weekly meeting on Tuesday.
6. Internal evaluation of Secondary processes		
Involved staff and Head Operations		
	C	Evaluation of work processes is a permanent point of discussion during the periodic meetings of every department / section of the organisation (Head Operations and IQA team).
	A	Points of improvement are immediately picked up by the concerning staff member or discussed in the meetings of the Management Team on initiative of the Head Operations, who reports on a regular basis IQA results to the Management Team.
	P	The Management Team adds the measures for improvement to the activities of the secondary processes.
	D	The measures for improvement are processed and included in the assessment processes as manuals and instructions. The entire organisation is informed about updates by e-mail, intranet and the weekly meeting on Tuesday.
7. Internal evaluation of NVAO's Internal Quality Assurance		
Sounding board group IQA		
	C	Evaluation of NVAO's IQA. Besides that single operational issues can be discussed (IQA team).
	A	Points of improvement are discussed between the responsible board member, the director and the IQA coordinator and, thereafter, presented to NVAO staff. The IQA coordinator reports on a regular basis to the Board and the Management Team about the development of NVAO's IQA.
	P	The Management Team secures measures for improvement regarding the approach and operation of NVAO's IQA.
	D	The measures for improvement are processed and included in NVAO's processes. The entire organisation is informed about updates by e-mail, intranet and the weekly meeting on Tuesday.

2. Evaluation Scheme

Internal – Primary processes							
Assessment process	Objective	Respondents	Responsible NVAO staff	Instrument	Frequency and time	Actors on results	Report to
Institutional audit Netherlands	Improving approach and execution of the audit. Improving quality of the panels.	Higher education institution: the board and central staff internal quality assurance	Team Internal Quality Assurance	Web-based survey	After the completion of every institutional audit procedure	MGT / AF MGT = Management Team	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
Institutional review Flanders	System evaluation; Monitoring and improving approach and execution of the review. Improving quality of the panels	1. Higher education institution: the board and central staff internal quality assurance 2. Evaluation group / stakeholders	1. the board and process coordinator 2. the board and review coordinator	1. Meeting with the Higher education institution 2. System evaluation	1. After the completion of every institutional review procedure 2. Autumn 2017	MGT / responsible Board member	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
Accreditation Netherlands (including research masters)	Improving quality of content and processes of accreditation	Directors of faculties or schools	Team Internal Quality Assurance	Web-based survey	All Higher education institutions in 2016	MGT / responsible Board member	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
Accreditation Flanders	Improving quality of content and processes of accreditation	Directors of faculties or schools	Team Internal Quality Assurance	Web-based survey	All Higher education institutions in 2016 involved in finished assessments	MGT / responsible Board member	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
Initial Accreditation	Improving quality of content and processes of initial accreditation	Directors of faculties or schools or programme managers	Team Internal Quality Assurance	Web-based survey	After the completion of every initial accreditation procedure	MGT / responsible Board member	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
	Improving quality of panel members including student members	Process coordinator	Process coordinator / Policy advisor	Process coordinator formulates points of attention for discussion in the board	After the completion of every initial accreditation procedure	MGT / responsible Board member	Part of the discussion on the application in the board meeting

(Assessment) process	Objective	Respondents	Responsible NVAO staff	Instrument	Frequency and time	Actors on results	Report to
Initial Accreditation, Institutional audit / institutional review	Improving quality of external secretaries	Process coordinator	Processs coordinator / Policy advisor	Process coordinator formulates points of attention for discussion in the board	After the completion of every procedure initial accreditation, Institutional audit or institutional review	MGT / responsible Board member	Part of the discussion on the application in the board meeting
Accreditation	Improving quality of external secretaries	NVAO Policy advisor	NVAO Policy advisor	Survey part of the analysis form	Every application	MGT / responsible Board member	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
Initial Accreditation, Institutional audit / institutional review / Accreditation	Improving quality training of chairs, students and external secretaries of panels	Participants of the training (Chairs, student members and external secretaries)	NVAO trainer	Survey	After completion of every training	MGT / responsible Board member	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
Communication en Human Resource Management	Improving internal communication, organisational culture and staff satisfaction. Improving external communication; communication with Higher education institutions and improving reputation of NVAO	All staff NVAO Participants NVAO events Representatives of stakeholder organisations	Departments Communication and Human Resource Management	Survey on staff satisfaction and on working conditions Image research	Every two year After completion of every event Every five years	MGT / responsible Board member	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
International projects	Improving project cooperation and identifying project results	1. Internal in department Internationalisation 2. External among involved Higher education institutions and panel members	Department Internationalisation	1. Update action list every month 2. Short survey	1. During regular meetings of the department Internationalisation and during reflections days of the board 2. During and after completion of every project	MGT / responsible Board member	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
Internal projects	Improving project cooperation	NVAO Policy advisors	Coordinator Internal Quality Assurance	Survey	After completion of every, bigger project	MGT / responsible Board member	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
Process coordination	Improving quality of process coordination Evaluation project	Panel members Secretariat Policy advisors Process coordinators	Process coordinator Human Resource Management Coordinator Internal Quality Assurance	Survey Oral Survey / Meeting	After completion of every procedure During team meetings / After completion project	MGT / responsible Board member	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations

Internal - Secondary processes							
Process	Objective	Respondents	Responsible NVAO staff	Instrument	Frequency and time	Actors on results	Report to
Supporting services - team meetings of every department	Improving quality of operational processes of supporting services	Staff of ICT, Finance, Facilities, HRM, Secretariats, Reception and Archive.	Head Operations	Periodic meetings	Every month	MGT	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
Supporting services - organisational level	Improving quality of operational processes and cooperation of supporting services	One representative of every department	Head Operations and director NVAO	Periodic meetings	Every six months	MGT	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
Sounding board group IQA organisational level	Improving quality of approach IQA in the organisation and identifying weaknesses in NVAO's operation	One representative of every department or part of the organisation	IQA coordinator, responsible board member and director	Periodic meetings	Every six months	MGT / responsible Board member	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
NVAO Reflection days	Evaluation of NVAO's operation and identifying input for development of NVAO's strategy	All NVAO staff, Management Team and Board	Board and Management Team	Study event of one day	Once a year	Board / MGT	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
External - Stakeholders							
Process	Objective	Respondents	Responsible NVAO staff	Instrument	Frequency and time	Actors on results	Report to
Advisory board NVAO	Discussing policy issues and asking for feedback on NVAO's operation and policy	Members NVAO's advisory board	Board and Director	Periodic meetings	Every six months	Board / MGT	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
Periodic meetings with external stakeholders (umbrella organisations in HE, department of education, employers and labour organisations)	Discussing policy issues and asking for feedback on NVAO's operation and policy	Representatives on board level of external stakeholders	Board and Management Team	Periodic meetings	Every two months	Board / MGT	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations

Periodic meetings with the Inspectorate of education	Adjustment about both assignments in Higher education	Representatives of the Inspectorate of education	Board and Management Team	Periodic meetings	Every two months	Board / MGT	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
Process	Objective	Respondents	Responsible NVAO staff	Instrument	Frequency and time	Actors on results	Report to
Sounding board group Flanders	Discussing policy issues and asking for feedback on NVAO's operation and policy	Representatives of the Flemish department of Education, the Flemish Government, VLIR, VLHORA and VLUHR	Board and Policy advisors	Periodic meetings	Every two months	Board / MGT	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
Assessment Agencies (NL)	Discussing policy issues and Discussing policy issues and asking for feedback on NVAO's operation and policy	Representatives of QANU, NQA, Hobéon, Certiked and AeQui	Board and Policy advisors	Periodic meetings	Every six months plenary and once a year bilateral	Board / MGT	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
VLUHR (VL)	Discussing policy issues and asking for feedback on NVAO's operation and policy	Representatives of VLUHR	Board and Policy advisors	Periodic meetings	Every six months	Board / MGT	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
Study visits to Higher education institutions in NL and FL	Meeting representatives, learning, tuning and asking for feedback on NVAO's operation and policy	Representatives of Higher education institutions	Board and Policy advisors	Visit to the Higher education institution	On a regular basis and on agreement	Board	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
Attributing to congresses, seminars and study meetings,	Mutual exchange of knowledge and experiences	Participants of these events	Board and Policy advisors	Congresses, seminars and study meetings by presentations, discussions and participation.	On a regular basis	Board and Policy advisors	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
Accreditation system NL and FL	Development new system, starting 2017	All stakeholders in NL: OCW / IHO / Umbrella organisations / HE institutions FL: Department Education, Government, VLIR, VLHORA, VLHUR	Board and Policy advisors	Periodic meetings plenary and bilateral	In de ontwikkelfase intensief	Government in NL and FL	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations
Accreditation system NL and FL	Evaluation and further development Accreditation system	All stakeholders in NL: OCW / IHO / Umbrella organisations / HE institutions FL: Department Education, Government, VLIR, VLHORA, VLHUR	Board and Policy advisors	Research Meetings Sounding board group	NL: every six years (2013 and 2019) FL: system evaluation in autumn 2017	Government in NL and FL	Board, Management Team, Policy advisors, Secretariats, Departments Communication and Operations

3. Feedback Analysis Spring 2016

	Opportunities for improvement	Proposed measure(s) – who, what and when?
1	Improve the directions to institutions for preparing accreditation applications on NVAO's website.	Head of Communication adds the names of involved board and staff members to the different assessment processes and subjects on the webpages when the board has finalised the new portfolio of the separate board members (February 2016)
2	Reduce and clarify the information on NVAO's website.	Director and Head of Communications will screen and improve the website in this respect (February 2016)
3	Respect the deadlines for the handling of applications better.	The Management Team will present an overview of deadlines in the Tuesday meeting and will emphasize the importance respecting these deadlines (February 2016).
4	Improve the external communication with Higher Education Institutions during the assessment period (be proactive, in time and clear, especially about possible delays).	The Management will emphasize the importance of proactive communication with Higher Education Institutions in the weekly staff meetings on Tuesday (February 2016).
5	<p>Improve consistency (of analyses and application of decision rules):</p> <p>Internal: coverage of cluster applications, peer-to-peer coaching (concerns the processes as well as the coverage of content).</p> <p>External (with the assessment agencies); training chairs, peer-to-peer coaching external secretaries, application of cluster approach (overlap of panels), periodic meetings with the assessment agencies.</p>	<p>Internal – The Management Team deploys, in cooperation with the IQA coordinator a concrete agenda on discussion topics for peer-to-peer coaching during the coverage of cluster applications and for the weekly staff meetings on Tuesday. Parallel the Management Team facilitates the progress of the HR activity Peer-to-peer coaching, the follow up of the project Process Coordination (February 2016).</p> <p>External – All mentioned activities are in progress, but deserve permanent monitoring, especially the consistency issue. The Management Team initiates the peer-to-peer coaching meeting for external secretaries (April 2016).</p>
6	Provide more clarity about alternative or additional trajectories to be followed during assessment procedures.	The document 'Additional questions on applications' deserves attention. An update might be necessary (Management Team). An actual version of the document is discussed in the weekly staff meeting on Tuesday (March 2016).
7	Change the feedback paragraph in the note for the Board regarding the decision on an application. Only bad or very well performing panels are evaluated in this paragraph. The process coordinator adds 'bad or excellent' performance to the database eQu. Policy advisors should always consult eQu before they present a proposal for panel composition to the involved board member.	The IQA coordinator communicates this message by e-mail to the NVAO staff and at the weekly meeting at Tuesday (February 2016).
8	Information to Institutions concerning applications for accreditation and related panel activities, is always sent in parallel to the assessment agency (if involved).	The IQA coordinator communicates this message by e-mail to the NVAO staff and at the weekly meeting at Tuesday (February 2016).
10	Plan a follow up meeting with AeQui in June or July 2016 about the quality of assessment reports.	The IQA coordinator plans a meeting with the secretariat of the Board (March 2016).

4. Samples of evaluations

A. Initial accreditation evaluations

Following the completion of an initial accreditation procedure, the contact person of the programme will be requested to fill in a brief questionnaire via Survey Monkey. Programmes that withdraw their application will not receive such a request. Questionnaires will be forwarded following conditional initial accreditations and following the satisfaction of the conditions stipulated for the initial accreditation.

Questionnaire

1. How do you assess the following aspects of the initial accreditation (1 = very poor, 5 = very good)? If the aspect does not apply to you or to the procedure for processing the application, please select NA.

Aspect 1: The instructions pertaining to the preparation of the application

Aspect 2: The level of expertise of the panel

Aspect 3: The working method of the panel

Aspect 4: The extent to which the advisory report sketches an identifiable picture of the operation of the institution's internal quality assurance system

Aspect 5: The information provision by NVAO during the procedure

Aspect 6: The care taken by NVAO in its decision-making

Aspect 7: The readability of the decision

Aspect 8: The extent to which the decision sketches an identifiable picture of the quality of the programme

Aspect 9: The communication with NVAO

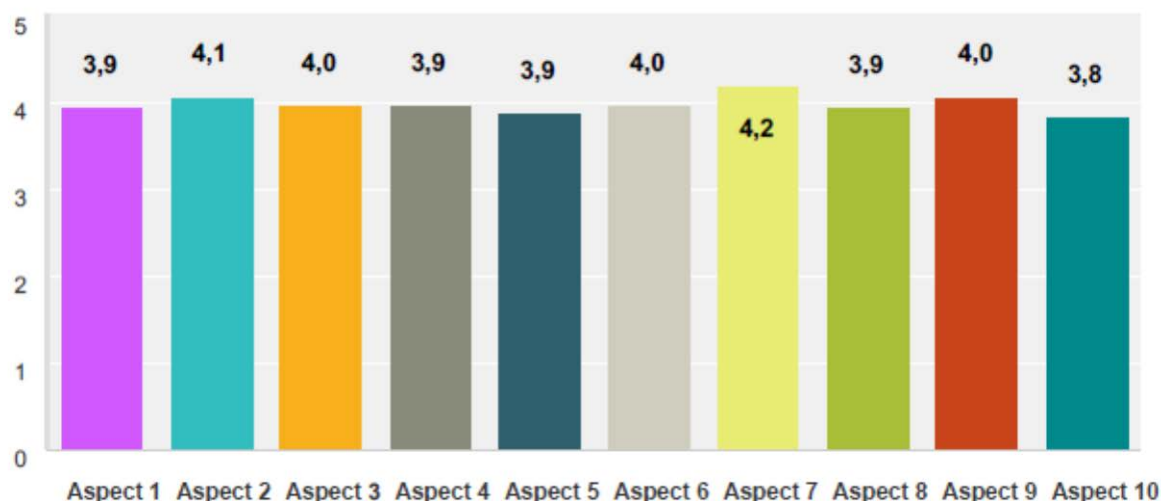
Aspect 10: The validity of the discipline-specific learning outcomes (Flanders)

2. How would you rate the entire institutional audit process? Please give a report mark on a scale of 1 to 10.

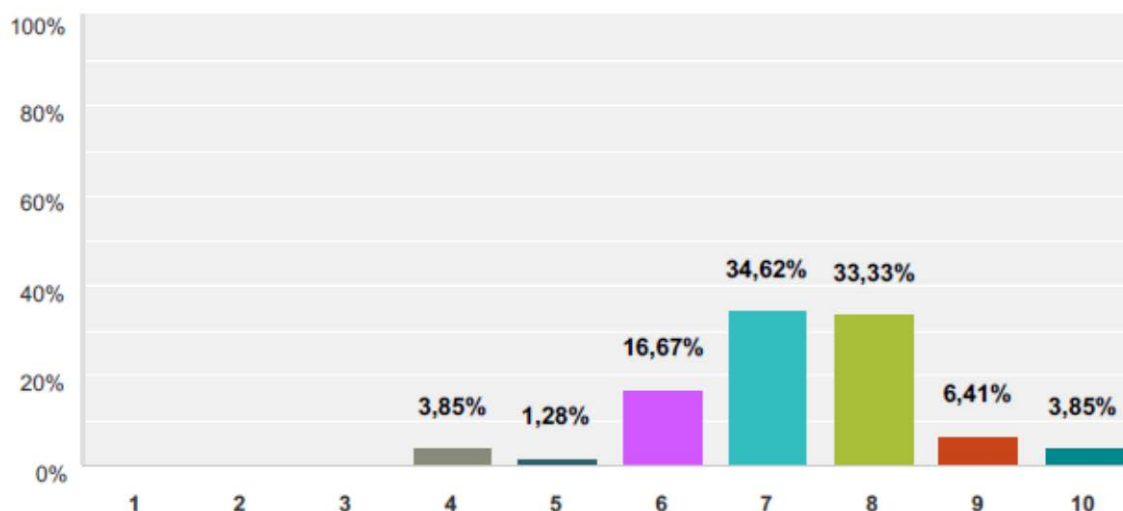
Results

The first questionnaires were sent out in August 2011. A total of 277 programmes have been requested to fill out a questionnaire. NVAO has received 150 responses. An overview of the 80 most recent responses is presented below (responses received after 13 February 2014, as some of the questions have been slightly modified).

Question 1



Question 2



Noteworthy comments:

Relating to aspect 1:

- The staff member responsible was clear regarding what we could expect and the applicable time frame.
- This was our second application for a new major. Perhaps more clarity re the objectives could have helped us to avoid having to re-apply.

Relating to aspect 2:

- Though not directly related to expertise, a slightly related point is attention to diversity. A female panel member would be appreciated.
- Occasionally we were under the impression that the interviews were influenced by personal opinions/interests of the panel members. This raised the question as to how much leeway should be provided in this respect.
- The expertise of the panel was reflected on paper, but not all the panel members were given the opportunity to use their expertise during the site visit.

Relating to aspect 3:

- Seemed efficient - well organised by the NVAO leader.
- We were requested to submit a great deal of supplementary information within a relatively short period of time, which put our small institution under great pressure. We nonetheless managed to comply. During the site visit, one of the panel members was given a lot of room, perhaps too much so, to ask questions about matters we considered of lesser relevance.

Relating to aspect 4:

- Some adjustments were needed.
- Although the assessment, in principle, is focused on the contents and level of the curriculum and the aims and objectives, formal aspects are given a relatively great deal of attention.
- The report was written in a clear style.

Relating to aspect 5:

- Good contact with the process coordinator.
- Causes of delay were not communicated clearly.
- Procedure took much longer than usual; in such cases, pro-active provision of information is essential.

Relating to aspect 6:

- Unfortunately, we lost time from the first application until the second successful application. As we had to wait an entire year, perhaps this could have been expedited?
- The satisfaction of the conditions was examined with exceptionally meticulous care, resulting in a huge loss of time. Out of all proportion.

Relating to aspect 7:

- It was readable. Panel findings in English but decision in Dutch, which is confusing.
- The decision concerning recognition was brief and to the point.
- Additional explanation following the first (negative) report was highly appreciated.

Relating to aspect 8:

- The conditions we were given are confusing, because they are either inconsistent with a previous German accreditation (one year before) or not clear due to ambiguity.
- We agree with the description of the programme.

Relating to aspect 9:

- The communication was professional, clear and timely.
- Pleasant, smooth, with a feeling for the needs of the programme when it was pressed for time in the final stage of the decision-making.

In general:

- Overall, the comments of NVAO were very instructive in helping us develop our new bachelor's programme. Thank you
- The new programme we submitted has initially been rejected. The reasons given for that decision made it clear that NVAO considered the programme insufficiently finalised. This was already evident after submission of the documents. In our opinion, NVAO should not have conducted an accreditation visit but rather inform us, based on the documents, that the programme was not fit for accreditation. An additional factor is that in our opinion, the NVAO guidelines for initial accreditations were insufficiently clear as regards the desired extent of finalisation.
- It would be good to have some strong educational expertise on each panel.
- The work we are required to do for the Committee for Effective Higher Education (CDHO) and under the CDHO protocol seems to be ill coordinated with the initial accreditation procedure. From the perspective of Groningen University, we view the entire process, which currently seems to be divided into two components that are hardly coordinated, as quite cumbersome and also disappointing.
- The chair should monitor the equal distribution of questions among the experts on the panel, in order to ensure that all the aspects of the programme are covered more comprehensively.

B. Institutional audit evaluations

Following the completion of an institutional audit procedure, the contact person of the institution will be requested to fill in a brief questionnaire via Survey Monkey. The questionnaire will also be forwarded to institutions that have withdrawn their application and institutions whose application has been assessed negatively. With respect to institutional audits whose final conclusion is “conditionally positive”, the institution may expect a questionnaire after the assessment of its satisfaction of the conditions.

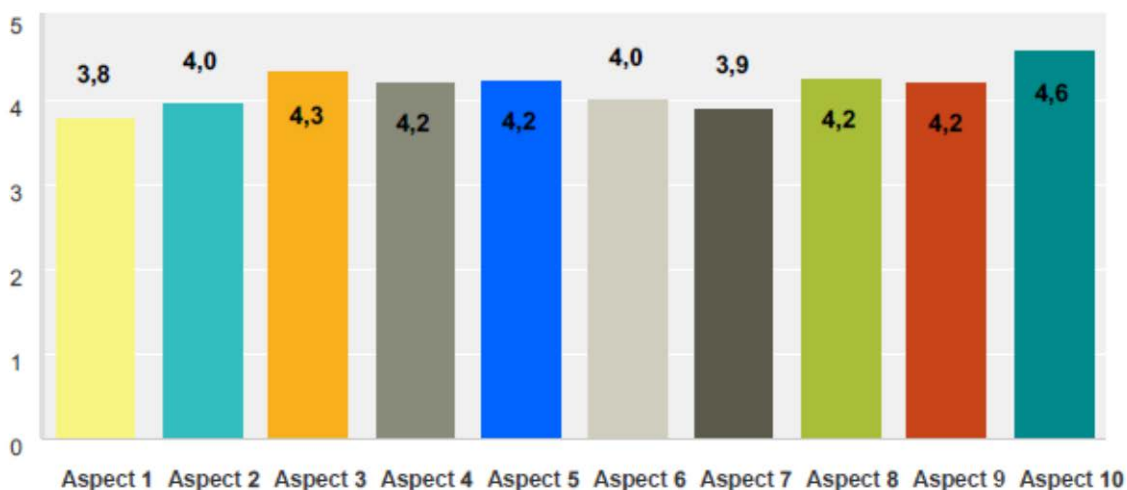
Questionnaire

1. How do you assess the following aspects of the **institutional audit** (1 = very poor, 5 = very good)? If the aspect does not apply to you or to the procedure for processing the application, please select NA.
Aspect 1: The instructions pertaining to the preparation of the application
Aspect 2: The extent to which the administrative consultations provided insight into the aims and objectives and the procedure of the institutional audit
Aspect 3: The level of expertise of the panel
Aspect 4: The working method of the panel
Aspect 5: The extent to which the advisory report sketches an identifiable picture of the operation of the institution's internal quality assurance system
Aspect 6: The information provision by NVAO during the procedure
Aspect 7: The care taken by NVAO in its decision-making
Aspect 8: The readability of the decision
Aspect 9: The extent to which the decision sketches an identifiable picture of the institution's quality assurance
Aspect 10: The communication with NVAO
2. How would you rate the entire institutional audit process? Please give a report mark on a scale of 1 to 10.

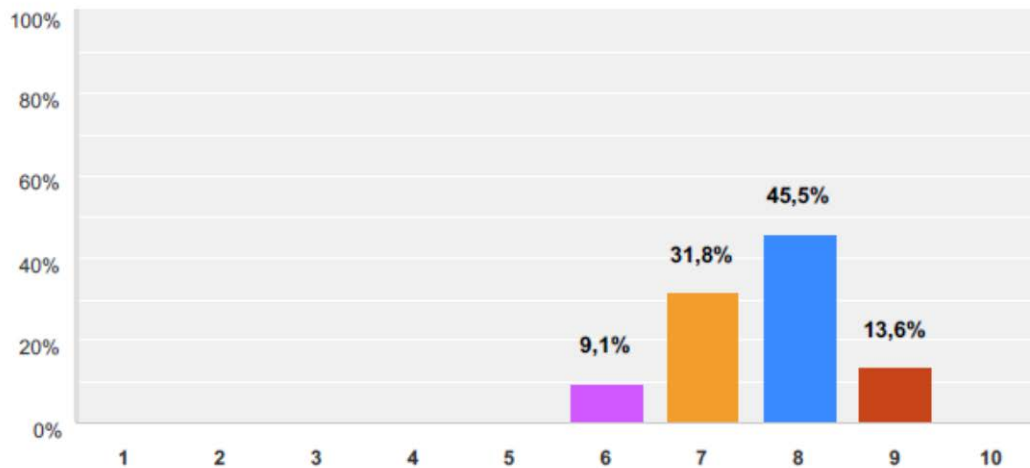
Results

The first questionnaires were sent out on 25 April 2013. A total of 36 institutions have been requested to fill out a questionnaire (of which 2 institutions for a second time now). NVAO has received 25 responses. The results are listed below.

Question 1



Question 2



Noteworthy comments:

Relating to aspect 1:

- The concrete preparations got off to a rather slow start, also considering the fact that the procedure concerned a repeat institutional audit
- Everything was clear, except for the quite cumbersome way in which we were required to provide the confidential data regarding staff and students to be interviewed. The provision of the names of students with a functional disability caused some trouble on account of the Privacy Act.

Relating to aspect 2:

- The administrative consultations did not provide sufficient insight. This was remedied at a later stage, following consultations.
- Much was already clear. The consultations did not by definition provide a great deal of supplementary insight.

Relating to aspect 3:

- One of the panel members held a different, predisposed definition of research in the arts, which made things difficult for us.
- We are quite pleased with the expertise of the panel. We appreciated the fact that the composition of the panel was geared to our situation and did justice to our complex organisation as a metropolitan university.

Relating to aspect 4:

- On the accreditation days, the panel proceeded in an efficient and adequate manner. Its attitude was critical yet positive, enabling constructive work. The same was true for the preparatory work done by the panel secretary. The panel members worked constructively and in proper coordination. An important factor was that the NHL itself was also given a sufficient say in the procedure with respect to relevant issues.
- Very critical, open, friendly, devoting equal attention to all the issues, clear communication. However, the requests for documentation were excessive. And subsequently we were rather surprised at being told that we really forwarded a lot of paper.
- The panel knew how to get to the crux of matters. During the first audit day and at the beginning of the procedures, they tended to stay in their own room rather than explore the university premises.

Relating to aspect 5:

- Good, also because of the constructive way in which our response to the draft report has been incorporated. Occasionally, observations at the programme level were erroneously generalised to the institutional level.
- They really managed to nail this. The recommendations are really helpful.

Relating to aspect 6:

- As already announced, the information provision got off to a slow start. In the end, all went well.
- We received timely answers to all our questions.

Relating to aspect 7:

- Great care, but putting off time frames has created unnecessary noise at various levels of the organisation.

Relating to aspect 8:

- Most of the contents have been adopted from the advisory report and the advisory report was very readable.

Relating to aspect 9:

- Good. The picture confirms our own observations.
- The decision corresponded to the advisory report on all counts. The advisory report already gave a good picture of the system, and so the decision did too.

Relating to aspect 10:

- Excellent: constructive, open and enjoyable collaboration.
- Business-like and purposeful.

In general:

- In my opinion, it would be relevant to further examine the added value of the institutional audit versus the programme assessment. In other words: what is the difference between the new and the old systems? What does it bring us (particularly with respect to the primary process)?
- Start substantiating the strands at an earlier date. Horrible job, planning this on such short notice.

C. Process coordination evaluations

All the panel members and secretaries involved in initial accreditations, institutional audits, and verification commissions will be asked to give their opinion of the process and the process coordinator. To this end, they will be requested to fill in a Survey Monkey questionnaire.

Questionnaire

Dear panel member,

NVAO identifies five important qualities in proper process coordination: expertise, care, consistency, timeliness, and professional conduct (including communication). Process coordination is mainly substantiated by the process coordinator, whose efforts will be supported by the policy secretariat. The process coordinator must demonstrate the above qualities in four roles: process monitor, liaison, coach, and organiser.

- The process monitor: focuses on substantive monitoring of the assessment process, is acquainted with the frameworks and guidelines, safeguards, e.g. a comprehensive and careful approach during the interviews and with respect to the formation of judgements.

- The liaison: the kingpin in the institution-panel-NVAO triangle, adopts an active, neutral and independent stance, and communicates in an adequate and especially timely fashion within the triangle. Promotes the observance of the relevant perspectives and points for departure. Acts as a mediator.

- Coach: pursues the desired group dynamics in the assessment process, primarily within the panel and its attitude vis-à-vis the institution. Intervenes if so prompted by the interaction between the institution and the panel.

- Organiser: ensures, in collaboration with the policy secretariat, that the assessment process runs smoothly in terms of logistics. Key elements are timeliness in planning and communication within the triangle.

How has the process coordinator manifested the above qualities and roles in the various stages of the process? How have you experienced the support provided by the policy secretariat?

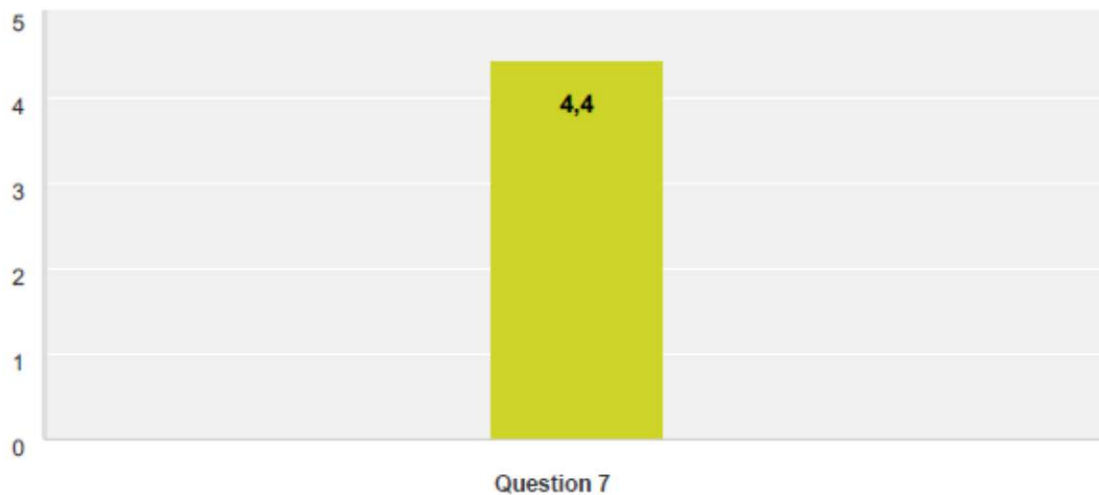
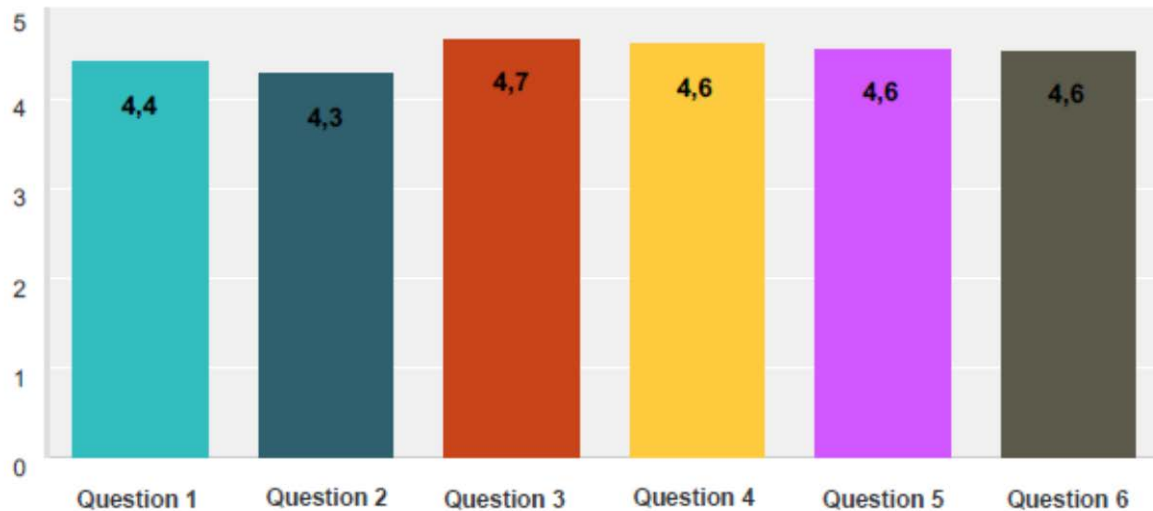
Please explain your opinions, because they provide a basis for potential improvement. The outcomes will only be provided to the process coordinator in order to foster his professional development. Twice a year, NVAO receives an anonymised outline of the results.

Please give your opinion on a five-point scale (1 = unsatisfactory, 2 = mediocre, 3 = satisfactory, 4 = good, 5 = very good) and provide your explanation immediately below. Insofar as is applicable, please reflect on the qualities and roles described with respect to all the questions (i.e., in each stage of the assessment process).

1. How has the process coordinator prepared the assessment process?
2. How has the process coordinator fulfilled his role in the preparatory meeting prior to the visit?
3. How has the process coordinator supported the interviews during the site visit (such as monitoring the application of the entire assessment framework, monitoring the discussion and other aspects)?
4. How has the process coordinator supervised the formation of a final conclusion at the end of the site visit?
5. How has the process coordinator contributed to the formulation of a high-quality panel report?
6. What information and attention has the process coordinator provided during the completion of the assessment process?
7. What administrative support has the NVAO secretariat provided in the assessment process? This pertains to timeliness, comprehensive and well-structured planning, and the provision of information and documents.

Results

The first questionnaires were sent out on 26 February 2016. A total of 15 programmes have been covered, i.e., 68 panel members (including secretaries). NVAO has received 44 responses. The results are listed below.



Noteworthy comments:

Relating to question 1:

- Communication and framework to be used for the assessment were very clear.
- Proper and timely provision of information. The only minus seems to be the unexpected withdrawal of one of the auditors on account of earlier work done for the university college (perhaps inquiring in even more depth regarding any ties in the past?)

Relating to question 2:

- The process coordinator outlined the roles and duties of the panel members during the audit, emphasising that all aspects must be sufficiently addressed.
- Directing what the panel members must and must not address.
- Little time

Relating to question 3:

- The process coordinator identified where the questions and discussion topics insufficiently covered the assessment framework.
- Very good coaching and monitoring.

Relating to question 4:

- Professional and with an eye for the proper implementation of standards.
- It was a difficult assessment. It has contributed to finding the best possible solution, to do justice to both the findings and the quality of the programme.

Relating to question 5:

- Careful and professional
- Correct contribution without excessive control, respectful of panel members' opinions and with regard for the role of the chairperson.

Relating to question 6:

- Correct communication, neutral attitude, perceptive, clear and stimulating.

Relating to question 7:

- Good documents, received timely, with clear instructions.
- One of the documents arrived a bit late. Contents of the interviews have been processed to a particularly high standard.

In general:

- In retrospect, I could have used a brief explanation prior to the assessment.
- As a panel member, I have experienced the contribution of ##### to the assessment procedure as very good. Everything shows that she is an experienced process coordinator. The collaboration with the chairperson and other panel members was quite pleasant. She was clear, critical where needed, yet did not lose sight of the social aspects. This enabled the panel to fulfil its task in an optimal manner.
- In my perception, the standard of the process coordination was very high. Wherever necessary, we received expert support and whenever his support was not immediately required, the process coordinator was present in a discreet fashion (yet present nonetheless).
- This was not an easy assignment and #####'s input was of major importance to guide the panel in the formation of its judgement.

ENQA Review 2017
Self-Assessment Report NVAO

Annex 9

Profiles panel chair and process coordinator

Table of content	1. Profile panel chair
	2. Profile sketch process coordinator

Profile of Panel Chairs; programme assessments in the Netherlands

January 2016

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1 Introduction

The Profile for assessment panel chairs has been drawn up in collaboration with quality assessment agencies, with input from twenty chairs highly experienced in external quality assurance. The version at hand has been approved by the Board of NVAO. This Profile applies to chairs of panels conducting programme assessments¹ in the Netherlands.

The Profile outlines what is expected from assessment panel chairs. This involves a mix of skills, attitudes, and know-how. The responsibilities of the panel chair have been divided into seven core competencies. The competencies have been translated into behaviour demonstrating that such competencies are put into practice, the so-called “behaviour indicators”.

This concrete description of the chair profile constitutes the basis for the training/briefing of panel chairs. For example, the interview with the process coordinator or assessment agency secretary could provide an answer to the question as to how this may be substantiated in concrete terms during the site visit.

In addition, the Profile may be used in the selection of panel chairs. Chairs are approached on the basis of confidence in their expertise, authority, and independence. This ensures that a panel chair, in general, commands the know-how and skills required to conduct a professional assessment.

Furthermore, the Profile is used by the quality assessment agencies and NVAO to develop training activities. For example, a draft training manual has been developed structured on the basis of the seven core competencies. This may be used in a selective and targeted manner, whenever more detailed or in-depth instruction is required during the training of panel chairs.

NVAO and the quality assessment agencies have agreed that this Profile will be used to optimally prepare panel chairs for their chairmanship. Annual evaluation will reveal whether the training is successful and where it needs to be and/or could be improved.

¹ Accreditation of existing programmes and initial accreditations (new programmes).

2 The Profile

The profile distinguishes seven core competencies that are of important relevance in the assessment process concerning panel chairs.

The panel chair shall adopt and safeguard:

1. An appropriate assessment framework

The panel chair directs an authoritative substantive assessment, based on the programme's own aims and objectives and (teaching strategy) choices, which observes the open standards and instructions set out in the accreditation framework.

2. A careful group process

The panel chair fosters a careful group process within the panel of experts.

3. Targeted audit skills

The panel chair commands and safeguards targeted audit skills.

4. A well-balanced assessment

The panel chair ensures a well-balanced assessment process which does justice to various aspects of external quality assurance in the higher education system.

5. Robust formation of judgements

The panel chair ensures the robust formation of judgements.

6. Transparent communication

The panel chair commands good communication skills.

7. Independence

The panel chair ensures the independence of the panel.

2.1 Specification of the seven core competencies

These core competencies are briefly explained below. In addition, for each of these core competencies a number of behaviour indicators have been formulated that demonstrate the presence of the competencies.

2.1.1 Appropriate assessment framework

Brief description

The first competency pertains to the definition of an appropriate substantive assessment framework which is relevant and pertinent in the context of the programme. The assessment must be based on the applicable framework. This framework defines the outlines of generic quality, in the form of open standards. Open standards are used to invite the institutions to formulate their own aims and objectives. In its critical reflection, the programme ascertains whether these aims and objectives are being achieved. These aims and objectives further define the educational level, reflect the explicit expectations of the professional field and peers, and tie in with recent developments. The panel is requested to observe the programme's own aims and objectives. The panel verifies whether the aims and objectives have been carefully reviewed on the basis of substantive requirements and expectations of peers and the professional field. These are set down in general qualification frameworks for the bachelor's or master's level and discipline-specific reference frameworks. In some cases, the panel will explicitly validate the discipline-specific assessment framework and supplement it with its own review points. The panel conducts a peer review in order to arrive at a substantive assessment.

Behaviour indicators

- The panel chair works on the basis of the applicable framework, is aware of its contents, and knows how to implement it as open standards.
- The panel chair encourages the panel to base its assessment on the programme's own aims and objectives, its target group, and its (teaching strategy) choices.
- The panel chair leads the panel in the making explicit/validation of an authoritative substantive (discipline-specific) assessment framework.
- The panel chair ensures that the international perspective is taken into consideration in the assessment.
- The panel chair has a feeling for (administrative) relations and the context in which the panel operates.

2.1.2 Careful group process

Brief description

The second competency pertains to the direction of the peer review as a group process. The composition of the panel is such as to reflect a wide range of relevant substantive expertise (peers). The assessment process is characterised by social interaction and group decisions. The group dynamics may influence the weight attached to information, and the manner in which panel members share and evaluate such information. The group process must be conducive to ensuring every aspect of the expertise commanded by the panel is given its due and properly considered. The group process also involves a few pitfalls that

need to be avoided, such as peer pressure and tunnel vision. The panel chair plays an important part in monitoring the group dynamics.

Behaviour indicators

- The panel chair leads the panel in its substantive assessment, which revolves around peer review.
- The panel chair directs the group process in the panel of experts:
 - encouraging input from all panel members based on their expertise, and ensuring the well-balanced consideration of all input provided;
 - focuses on the consideration of findings and the reaching of a consensus, in which good fellowship is maintained.
- The panel chair works in good harmony with the process coordinator and/or secretary.

2.1.3 Targeted audit skills

Brief description

The third competency pertains to the use of targeted audit skills. The audit skills are used to collect the information required to arrive at a judgement. They revolve around conducting interviews and the systematic analysis of documents. A safe climate is essential in order to gain a differentiated picture of the programme. An interested and respectful attitude on the part of the interviewer is important.

Open-ended questions widen the scope and asking further questions contributes to the verification of the facts. Non-functional interview situations must be cut short (monologues and discussions). Systematic document analysis contributes to the substantive and factual assessment of, e.g., courses, test material, staff qualifications et cetera.

Behaviour indications

- The panel chair leads the dialogue and ensures an open, evaluating, and functional meeting climate.
- The panel chair ensures an open-minded approach on the part of the panel towards the programme.
- The panel chair ensures that the interview is conducted in an effective manner, aimed at obtaining relevant information.
- The panel chair directs the document analysis.

2.1.4 Well-balanced assessments

Brief description

The fourth competency is aimed at the well-balanced operation of quality assurance functions and quality perspectives. The assessments serve to give account to all the stakeholders. In addition, the programmes are provided with recommendations for quality improvement. Rather than only focusing on quality assurance processes, the assessments must also contribute to reinforcing the quality culture. Multiple quality perspectives must be taken into account in this respect: "Quality is in the eye of the beholder". This calls for a well-balanced consideration of the views on quality held by the various stakeholders and experts. A well-balanced assessment also involves equal judgements in equal cases.

Behaviour indicators

- The panel chair ensures that both the accountability function and the quality improvement purpose of the assessment are considered in a well-balanced and sufficiently distinct manner.
- The panel chair ensures that quality assurance and quality culture are considered in a well-balanced manner.
- The panel chair ensures that all stakeholder perspectives are taken into consideration in the assessment.
- The panel chair monitors the consistency and comparability of the judgements, particularly with respect to assessments within an assessment cluster.

2.1.5 Robust formation of judgements

Brief description

The fifth competency concerns the robust formation of judgements. The judgement is substantiated with reliable and valid findings. Is the data representative? Can it be validated by triangulation? Are the findings recognised? The panel chair is aware of pitfalls in relation to the reliability of the findings. These may involve effects that can be attributed to researchers, such as taking limited observations as representative of the entire programme, tunnel vision among the panel members, generalising findings pertaining to a specific group, and partiality. Other pitfalls include influencing by personal dislikes, “window dressing”, “evasion”, and a “compliance culture” within the programme, painting too rosy a picture. The panel chair must also be aware of recognised forms of bias in peer reviews, such as “cognitive old-boyism”, “mutual back slapping”, and the halo, horn and Matthew effects.

Behaviour indicators

- The panel chair ensures that the panel’s joint judgement is traceably substantiated on the basis of reliable and valid findings that are representative of the programme as a whole.
- The panel chair recognises pitfalls to the reliability and representativeness of the findings, and takes appropriate measures.
- The panel chair is decisive.

2.1.6 Transparent communication

Brief description

The sixth competency focuses on effective communication, i.e., formulating the terms of reference of the panel. Listening to the interviewee, summarising, focusing particular attention on what is working well. Ensuring that conclusions are drawn for the benefit of the secretary and setting down a judgement supported by the entire panel. If the schedule features feedback, such judgement is presented in a well-balanced and respectful manner. The report must be readable and comprise the main conclusions. Furthermore, the panel chair must be prepared to explain the recommendation regarding accreditation in more detail to NVAO.

Behaviour indicators

- The panel chair formulates the panel’s terms of reference in perspicuous terms.
- The panel chair can listen, summarise, and provide feedback from an evaluating perspective focused on the assessment report.
- The panel chair reports in an accurate and respectful manner to the programme regarding the panel judgement, and ensures that it is provided with a useful report.

- The panel chair provides an explanation to the Board of NVAO (if so desired).

2.1.7 Safeguarding independence

Brief description

The seventh competency involves the safeguarding of independence and the prevention of prejudice. Each panel member is requested to verify, on the basis of the code of conduct, whether his or her independence is sufficiently safeguarded. The credibility of the assessment depends on the independent formation of a judgement. Any semblance of prejudice or manipulation will immediately compromise the credibility of the assessment. The core concepts of integrity are: professionalism, helpfulness, independence, reliability, and meticulousness.

Behaviour indicators

- The panel chair proactively safeguards the independence of the assessment, and takes appropriate measures in the event of (any semblance of) a conflict of interests.
- The panel chair intervenes in an effective manner in the event of prejudice and bias.
- The panel chair acts in an ethical manner.

Profile sketch
Process coordinator

Version 1.1 July 2015

Contents

1	Justification of the profile sketch	3
2	Duties of the process coordinator	3
3	Important principles in the assessment process	4
4	Profile set-up: roles and professional conduct	4

Date	Version	Authors	Description of amendment
03 Jun 2015	1.0	LW, HP, FW	Incorporation of project results
01 Jul 2015	1.1	LW, HP, FW	Incorporation of results of evaluation meeting 23 Jun 2015

1 Justification of the profile sketch

NVAO aims for uniformity and consistency in its process coordination. Each assessment process is tailored to the individual character of the programme or institution and reflects the professional evaluation of the panel and the process coordinator. However, major differences in approach, which can be prevented by better coordination, must be avoided.

The process coordination project has initiated a permanent structure of coordination between process coordinators. The training sessions and peer group meetings that have been conducted are aimed at reinforcing the desired conception of the duties, the mutual commitment to this issue and its shared ownership, thus improving the consistency of the process coordination.

The attached profile sketch is a first result of the project that spanned the period of November 2014 to June 2015. NVAO policy advisors have reflected on the duties of the process coordinator in various ways, taking account of external feedback. The project group has condensed the outcomes of this reflection into this document. It is a living document that requires regular adjustment based on new, widely supported insights, for example, following the self-directed peer group sessions to be continued in the autumn of 2015 and beyond.

In the near future, the profile sketch will be available as a convenient and easy to consult booklet that each process coordinator will always carry in his or her briefcase. The booklet will regularly be updated.

Prior to describing the professional conduct in each phase of the assessment process, we will first formulate a brief description of the duties and a number of essential points of departure for the work to be carried out by the process coordinator.

2 Duties of the process coordinator

The NVAO process coordinator supervises the assessment process of an independent, authoritative and expert panel. He ensures that the panel:

- is well informed of all aspects of the assessment process upon commencing its work;
- respects the assessment framework, the associated guidelines, and the individual character of the programme or institution to be assessed;
- approaches the programme or institution with an open and unprejudiced mind, and;
- judges in a careful, consistent and professional manner.

In addition, the process coordinator ensures a smooth organisation of the assessment process. A key element is timely and careful communication with all parties concerned (institution, panel, and Board of NVAO).

3 Important principles in the assessment process

The process coordinator is aware of and operates on the basis of the following points of departure / values:

- Proceeds from the NVAO vision, mission and strategy, and is familiar with the international context of external quality assurance in higher education;
- Is well acquainted with relevant regulations and legislation;
- Proceeds from a proper understanding of the societal significance of (external and internal) quality assurance in higher education;
- Regularly reflects on his own functioning and as a result, pays attention to further training / improvement of his own functioning;
- Respects the autonomy of the institution and its own responsibility with respect to quality;
- Safeguards an independent and unprejudiced attitude among the panel members;
- Takes an independent and neutral stance vis-à-vis the programme, the panel, and NVAO;
- Encourages a substantive panel judgement based on peer review;
- Minimises the assessment burden for the institution and the panel;
- Safeguards equal treatment in similar assessment situations at other institutions;
- Safeguards consistency among various assessment processes with respect to procedures and judgement formation;
- Ensures that sufficient checks and balances are observed during the assessment process, for example, by hearing both sides and peer reviews.

4 Profile set-up: roles and professional conduct

The project has revealed that identifying just a limited number of distinct roles for the process coordinator is conducive to achieving a recognisable and concrete profile.

We have opted for the following four roles.

- Process monitor: focuses on substantive monitoring of the assessment process, is acquainted with the frameworks and guidelines, safeguards, e.g. a comprehensive and careful approach during the interviews and with respect to the formation of judgements.
- Liaison: the kingpin in the institution-panel-NVAO triangle, adopts an active, neutral and independent stance, and communicates in an adequate and especially timely fashion within the triangle. Promotes the observance of the relevant perspectives and points for departure. Acts as a mediator.
- Coach: pursues the desired group dynamics in the assessment process, primarily within the panel and its attitude vis-à-vis the institution. Intervenes if so prompted by the interaction between the institution and the panel.
- Organiser: ensures, in collaboration with the policy secretariat, that the assessment process runs smoothly in terms of logistics. Key elements are timeliness in planning and communication within the triangle.

With respect to the description of the professional conduct, five phases are distinguished in the assessment process.

These five phases in the assessment process are:

- Preparation (including coordinating consultations with the Chair);
- Preliminary panel meeting;
- Visit to the institution (or programme);
- Panel report and recommendations;
- Decision-making by NVAO.

The professional conduct envisaged for each role in each phase is outlined on the basis of a principle-based (rather than rule-based) point of departure. This means that the intended conduct serves as a regulatory principle rather than an instruction. In any situation, it is up to the (panel and the) process coordinator to assess the optimum stance or approach in a professional manner.

Process coordinator profile sketch: professional conduct and intended outcome of the process – v 1 June 2015	
Phase I	Preparation (assessment of information dossier and panel composition)
Role	Professional conduct
Process monitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Is aware of the requirements to be met by a panel and adequately directs the convening process in order to satisfy these requirements. – Submits a timely and appropriate panel proposal to the NVAO Board and the institution. – Safeguards the independence and impartiality of the panel in a pro-active manner. – Checks whether the information dossier suffices as basic material for the assessment. – Conducts a preliminary meeting with the panel chair to identify points for attention and supplementary details, if any. – Requests timely supplements to the information dossier from the institution. – Presents the complete information dossier to the panel in a timely, well-organised, and manageable manner.
Coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Has trained/briefed the panel chair regarding his role, and set down agreements regarding the collaboration and working method. – Encourages an open and independent attitude on the part of the panel during the assessment process. – Sets a good example with respect to the interpretation of duties in the assessment process (demonstrates a strong attitude).
Liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Encourages the panel to assess the programme on the basis of its chosen objectives and approach. – Sufficiently coordinates the expectations of all the parties involved. – Operates in an open, transparent and reliable manner, building confidence among all the parties involved. – Safeguards that the frameworks are observed. – Knows which information is relevant to the NVAO Board, and provides the Board member concerned or, as the case may be, the Board with full details in a timely fashion.
Organiser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Provides all the parties involved with the information required for a proper and careful preparation in a timely fashion. – Has set down the assessment process; the agreements are clear to all those involved. – Ensures an efficient planning of the work to be carried out, in collaboration with the policy secretariat.
Phase II	Preliminary panel meeting
Role	Professional conduct
Process monitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Directs the substantive preparations. – Safeguards the careful and comprehensive review of the dossier, sets down points for attention, and formulates a questionnaire. – Makes suggestions regarding the organisation of the site visit and the working method.
Coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Has the ability to exert authority in the panel; asserts himself distinctly and appropriately in a neutral, coordinating and supporting role. – Provides the panel with the proper mindset (open attitude, assessing the institution/programme on the basis of its points of departure, functioning as a team). – Actively encourages all panel members to contribute on the basis of their individual expertise. – Clarifies the points of departure for properly conducting interviews and a proper audit attitude. – Anticipates undesirable situations, pitfalls, or inappropriate behaviour.

Liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Provides a convincing explanation of the points of departure for the assessment process, answers questions regarding relevant legislation and regulations, the application of the assessment framework, decision-making within NVAO, the procedure as a whole, and any specific guidelines and/or consistencies with earlier, similar assessments. – Ensures that the programme is given the opportunity to properly prepare for the panel interviews in terms of content.
Organiser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ensures that all the agreements regarding the meetings and the steps in the assessment process have been set down. There is evidence that all those involved are acquainted with the agreements. – Actively monitors progress. – Ensures that the panel feels well attended and supported.
Phase III	Visit to the programme or institution
<i>Role</i>	<i>Professional conduct</i>
Process monitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ensures that the panel purposefully works on a sufficiently substantiated assessment report, points out undiscussed topics in a timely fashion, and encourages the perusal of the material made available. – Checks whether the judgements are sufficiently based on evidence. – Provides a relevant summary of the findings. – Safeguards a professional, comprehensive and careful formation of judgements, in which the evaluating panel statements are demonstrably based on findings. Supports the panel in formulating the feedback content.
Coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Directs and, whenever necessary and upon request, provides feedback regarding the topics discussed, the working method, the quality of the judgement, and the functioning as a team. – Respectfully intervenes in the event of imminent misunderstandings, insufficient coordination of expectations, misrepresentations of reality, problems in the group dynamics, or failure on the part of those involved to observe the rules or agreements.
Liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Supports the formation of (comprehensive) judgements within the frameworks, based on the points of departure of NVAO. – Adopts an actively open attitude vis-à-vis the programme in order to ensure the visit runs smoothly. – If necessary, informs the panel of experiences gained in earlier assessment processes during the formation of its judgement, for the sake of consistency.
Organiser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Monitors the time frame. – Acts as host and travel guide. – Provides clarity regarding the scheduling of follow-up steps.
Phase IV	Reports and recommendations
<i>Role</i>	<i>Professional conduct</i>
Process monitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Helps the secretary set down a substantively comprehensive and traceable panel report, points out any inconsistencies, underexposed topics, or misinterpretation of the assessment rules, and monitors their rectification. – Checks whether the report reflects the findings, arguments and reasonings of the panel. – Ensures that the report is supported and formally endorsed by the panel members.
Coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Encourages the substantive involvement of the panel members in writing the report.
Liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Makes the panel and the secretary aware of the requirements to be met by the report in terms of decision-making within NVAO and the public function. – Checks whether the perspectives of all the panel members and parties involved are sufficiently represented in the panel report. – Ensures that the report is a correct representation of the actual situation in the

	<p>institution, and enables the institution to point out any factual inaccuracies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ensures that relevant and appropriate recommendations are set down. – Informs the Board in the short term about the outcome of the assessment and any points requiring administrative attention.
Organiser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Observes a strict yet realistic planning with respect to the reporting phase. – Keeps the institution and the responsible Board member abreast of the intended planning.
Phase V	Decision-making
<i>Role</i>	<i>Professional conduct</i>
Process monitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Assesses whether the proposed accreditation decision is based on demonstrable and traceable findings and considerations in the panel report. – Observes the “four eyes principle” in problematical cases. – Provides the NVAO office, MGT and Executive Board with feedback regarding non-functioning panel members.
Liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Demonstrates a feeling for administrative relations. – Provides the portfolio holder with conscientious advice regarding the administrative processing of the report, specifying any points requiring attention from the Board. – Is able to incorporate administrative comments, doubts and questions in the final report and the final panel recommendations to the Executive Board. – Informs the institution correctly regarding the outcome of the assessment, providing an explanation if so required.
Organiser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ensures a correct processing of the assessment, in concert with the archives and the secretariat.

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Annex 10

Thematic analyses:
short description and
references

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Thematic
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1. Knowledge Co-Creation Quality Culture Professional Bachelors Communication Studies (NL) (2014)

In 2014, the Dutch association of communication studies (LOCO) and NVAO worked together in a project to stimulate the quality culture in professional programmes in Communication Studies through co-creation. Data and insights from teachers, students, the professional field and NVAO were collected and analysed with the aim of formulating opportunities and challenges and a vision for the future of the programmes in the domain. The resulting publication presents a 'mixed-method' analysis of qualitative data from assessment reports and quantitative data, reflections on the position of the programmes and the domain, and on the notion of co-creation in the context of quality assurance and accreditation.

The analysis can be found here (in Dutch only): <https://www.nvao.net/actueel/publicaties/nvao-loco-kenniscocreatie-kwaliteitscultuur-hbo-bachelors-communicatie>

2. Meta-evaluation accreditations of academic programmes Humanities and Communication Sciences (NL) (2015)

In 2014, NVAO decided on accreditation for most of the Dutch academic bachelor's and master's programmes in the Humanities and Communication Sciences. The outcomes of the assessments were generally positive, but also brought to light problems with the level of achieved learning outcomes in a relatively high number of programmes: 26 programmes (13% of the cluster) were judged insufficient and were awarded an improvement period. The thematic analysis describes the deficiencies on the basis of the assessment reports and analyses the causes. In many cases, the programmes did not prepare students adequately for writing an academic thesis. The programmes also judged some theses as sufficient which were not sufficient in the eyes of the assessment panel. Especially, some broad interdisciplinary programmes did not provide enough guidance to get students at the required level. The analysis also presents the measures recommended by the panels to prevent such problems.

The meta-evaluation can be found here (in Dutch only): <https://www.nvao.net/actueel/publicaties/meta-evaluatie-geesteswetenschappen-2014>

3. Employability of professional bachelors from an international perspective (NL/FL) (2014)

NVAO has commissioned the Center of Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) to make an explorative and international comparative study to gain insight into realisation, organisation and securing the connection between professional orientated bachelor's programmes and the labour market. The study analyses four higher education systems: Netherlands, Flanders, North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany), and Ireland. The study focuses on three distinct knowledge domains: mechanical engineering, social work, and

tourism. The research suggests a number of challenges for study programmes and policy makers on system level:

- 1) National definitions of domain-specific learning outcomes make study programmes too uniform, leaving too little room for differentiation and profiling.
- 2) Input mechanisms are mostly tailored to the regional or domestic labour market and may create problems when the international labour markets become more important.
- 3) Study programmes have to take into account an increasing number of stakeholders and influencers, on a variety of levels, with different and sometimes conflicting demands.
- 4) Uncertainty caused by employment dynamics in sectors triggers study programmes to utilize different strategic approaches to curriculum development with an eye to employment.

The study did not look into which strategic approach is best but highlighted good practices where these were encountered.

The report can be found here: <http://ecahe.eu/assets/uploads/2014/10/CHEPS-study.pdf>

4. Four years of new accreditation system in the Netherlands in figures (NL) (2014)

The 2013 evaluations of the Dutch accreditation that started in 2011 resulted in the general conclusion that the new system is functioning well. At the time of the evaluation, the system had only been in operation for 18 to 24 months. Therefore, NVAO set up a new analysis in 2014, when the system had been operational for four years, and more data was available on a number of aspects of the system. The report pertains to all accreditations and re-accreditations, initial accreditations, and institutional audits in the system that started in 2011. The analysis is based on qualitative and quantitative data from the assessment reports in the new system, and concerned among others the differentiation in judgements and the relationship between the outcome of the institutional audit and that of programme assessments for (initial) accreditation.

The text of the analysis can be found here:

<https://www.nvao.net/actueel/nieuws/vier-jaar-nieuw-accreditatiestelsel-hoger-onderwijs-nederland>

5. Discussion paper on the profile of Research Master programmes (NL) (2015, not published).

From 2003 until 2015, the Dutch research master's programmes were assessed by standing committees appointed by the Dutch Royal Academy of Sciences (KNAW). In 2015, KNAW decided to end this procedure and the assessment of research master's programmes was integrated into the regular assessment procedures for academic master's programmes. This change coincided with an initiative to review the additional criteria for these programmes, so NVAO invited the panel members, institutions and students to reflect on the outcomes of earlier assessments and suggest improvements for a new profile for this type of programmes. For this discussion, NVAO prepared an

analysis of the assessment reports, in which a number of themes were discussed, such as: the choice between a wide or a narrow research profile for the programme's, the overlap with regular master's programmes, the sources for determining the quality of the research context, the selection of students and measures to increase the number of students who graduate after two years.

The analysis followed on earlier analyses of research master's programmes in 2007 and 2011. The outcomes of the discussion provided input for the drafting of a new set of criteria for research master's programmes which will come into force in 2017.

The discussion paper is not published but is available on request by the panel.

6. - Teacher training programmes at universities (NL) (2015)

In 2014 and 2015, NVAO has accredited all teacher training programmes at Dutch universities. The outcomes were generally positive: only one programme was awarded an improvement period. The curricula of the programmes were sufficient and also the practice oriented elements in specially selected 'training schools' (opleidingscholen) are sufficient. NVAO's analysis is in line with the general remarks of the assessment panel on the state of the art of in the domain, that the programmes should improve on the following aspects: the view on what the profession of teacher entails should be reformulated in the light of training new teachers, the influx of new students should be increased, the quality of the domainspecific didactical methods and of the didactical specialist should be improved, and the quality of the students' final products needs improvement.

NVAO's analysis coincides with a general renewal of the teacher training programmes at Dutch universities, which address the recommendations by the assessment panel.

The analysis can be found here (only in Dutch): <https://www.nvao.net/actueel/publicaties/systeembrede-analyse-lerarenopleidingen>

7- Teacher training programmes for primary schools (NL) (2015)

In 2014 and 2015, NVAO has accredited all Dutch teacher training programmes for teachers of primary education ('pabo'). The quality of a third of the programmes was judged to be 'good', the rest was judged as 'sufficient'. This outcome demonstrated the considerable improvement of the programmes since the last assessment. The improvement concerns the influx, the faculty, the level of the achieved learning outcomes and the establishment of a quality culture. Progress has also been made in the development of an assessment policy and in the integration of research in the curriculum. With these improvement, the pabo's responded adequately to widespread worries at the quality of the training of teachers for primary education. In response to that they have tightened the requirements applied in the intake procedures as well as the level of the knowledge bases for mathematics and language. NVAO would like to see a further improvement in the attention for research throughout the curriculum, and in research

skills of the staff and their actual involvement in research, which would enable them better to encourage the necessary research driven attitude in the student.

The analysis report can be found here (in Dutch only): <https://www.nvao.net/actueel/publicaties/systeembrede-analyse-lerarenopleidingen>

8. Assessment and Demonstration of Achieved Learning Outcomes: Recommendations and Good Practices. Outcomes of the NVAO Peer Learning Event on 29-30 October 2015. (2016)

On 29-30 October 2015, NVAO hosted a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) on the assessment and demonstration of achieved learning outcomes. The event was organized in collaboration with the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Erasmus+ agency EP Nuffic. It focused on assessing and demonstrating achieved learning outcomes in response to the Bucharest Communiqué of 2012, which underlined that this element of student-centred learning and teaching still needs attention.

The PLA brought together stakeholders from quality assurance agencies and institutions of higher education from 13 countries in the EHEA to share knowledge and good practices, and arrive at formulating a set of guidelines for successfully implementing the assessment and demonstration of achieved learning outcomes.

The resulting document expresses how the topic of achieved learning outcomes brings up a number of issues connected with the use of learning outcomes in general on which there still is a lot of uncertainty and difference of opinion among stakeholders. The PLA concluded that a) the topic of achieved learning outcomes and their assessment and demonstration cannot be seen in isolation from the general use of learning outcomes, and b) there is no one single method or guideline for the implementation of achieved learning outcomes.

The guidelines document provides observations and recommendations on themes that are relevant to the assessment and demonstration of achieved learning outcomes. It is intended as a tool for stimulating and facilitating further communication and the development of existing practices.

The document can be found here: <https://www.nvao.net/actueel/publicaties/report-achieved-learning-outcomes-recommendations-and-good-practices>

9. Teacher training programmes in higher professional education (expected 2016)

A third analysis in the domain of Dutch teacher training programmes is almost finished at the time of writing. It deals with the teacher training programmes offered by universities of applied sciences in the Netherlands. The programmes lead to a 'second degree' teacher's diploma and license. The analysis deals with the outcomes of the recent round of accreditations in the domain.